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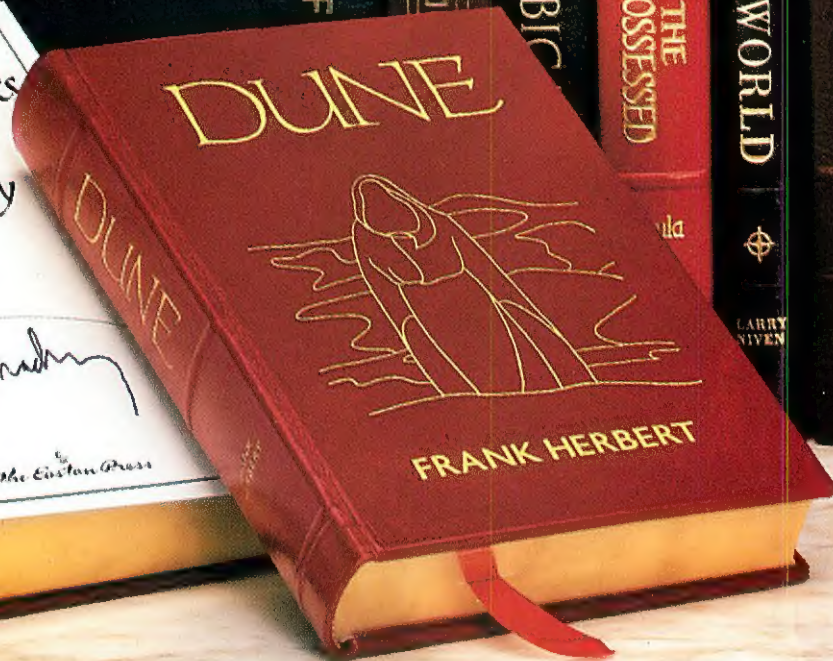
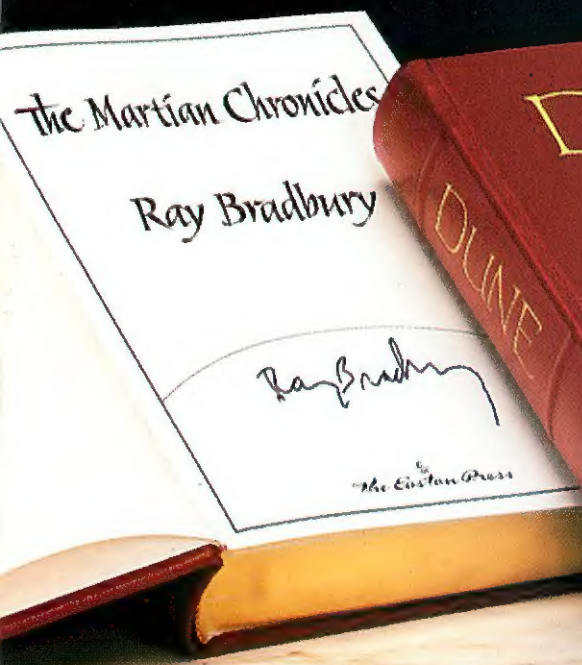
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COVER: Two weary starfighters appear ready for yet another battle. Painting by Steve Hickman. ABOVE: Wayne Barlowe, wizard of biological artistry, has conjured up a menagerie of marvels, such as the predatory Pronghead.

SCIENCE FICTION AGE

F I C T I O N

30 THE PRINCESS WHO DANCED UNTIL DAYBREAK

By Lois Tilton

The Princess fell in love with the Lord of the Underworld, beside whom no earthly mortal could compare. Her love was one for which she vowed she would risk her soul. Little did the Princess realize she might have to do just that!

34 ANDANTE LUGUBRE

By Barry Malzberg

The musical term of the title means "slow and mournfully." If only the composer Tchaikovsky, who had lived far too fast, could have aged the same way, what a different world we might all be inhabiting.

38 THY KINGDOM COME, PART II

By Ben Bova

Trapped with terrorists in a tunnel beneath a society that had abandoned them, Vic swore that with his street smarts, he and Jade could survive. But Jade was beginning to feel that nothing from the streets they had known could save them. Conclusion of a two-part novella.

46 HUNTING WABBIT

By Allen Steele

To a writer, getting rejected can seem like the end of the world. Only this time, it really *is* the end of the world!

60 ANOTHER COUNTRY

By Kim Antieau

The year 1984 has come and gone, and the world escaped the clutches of Big Brother. Unfortunately, the future holds many more 1984s in store for us.

D E P A R T M E N T S

6 EDITORIAL

We've been to the Moon, now let's go on to Mars.

8 LETTERS

To our loyal readers, even Snow White looks like SF.

10 BOOKS BY BISHOP, FEELEY AND BAKER

Two giants are celebrated, as we look at the biography of Arthur C. Clarke and Isaac Asimov's last novel. Plus a look at the latest *Full Spectrum* anthology.

18 TELEVISION BY M.C. VALADA

This fall, you'll be able to step through *Doorways* to alien parallel worlds. Also, we speak to the ace behind *Space Rangers*.

22 ESSAY BY ROBERT SILVERBERG

To the rest of the world, America *is* science fiction.

24 SCIENCE BY BEASON, LANDIS AND ZUBRIN

How near are we to a manned mission to Mars? Closer than you might have thought, say our experts.

54 GALLERY BY FREDERIK POHL

The creator of the alien HeeChee tells us everything you always wanted to know about Wayne Barlowe, the extraterrestrial expert.

66 GAMES BY JOHN BETANCOURT

When you cross cyberpunk with high fantasy you come up with the roleplaying sensation *Shadowrun*.

68 COMICS BY DAMIAN KILBY

Another alien comes to earth with powers far beyond those of mortal men.

74 CONTRIBUTORS



Aliens, Monsters, Dragons & Me

Take a journey into the incredible fantasy film world of legendary special effects wizard Ray Harryhausen. For over 40 years his cinematic wonders and mastery of stop motion animation have enchanted both children and adults. This fascinating video takes a look at his career and features scenes from 13 of the screen's best-loved fantasy films including King Kong, 7th Voyage of Sinbad, Clash Of The Titans, and others. An inside look at movie magic!

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SCI-Fi

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This sequel to *The Mind's Eye* takes us on a surrealistic voyage bridging the gap between reality and imagination. As you travel through the outer reaches of the universe your senses are assaulted with unbelievable images of computer animation. *Beyond* explores worlds that may exist in alternate dimensions—or only in the minds of the world's leading computer animators. This music of Jan Hammer add to the magical, mystical images of this video. You won't want to miss this video, it is guaranteed to blow your mind!

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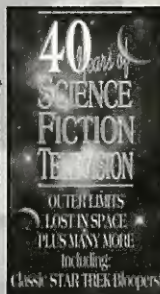
Rocky Jones, Space Ranger, Flash Gordon, Superman, Lost In Space and more highlight this fun compilation. Take a look at outtakes from *Star Trek's* three seasons on television. A must for every true sci-fi fan.

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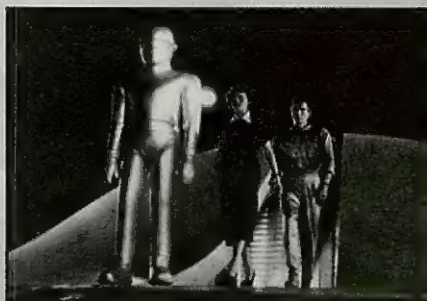
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Fantastic Planet

This entralling animated fantasy is about a future earth run by huge blue creatures who keep humans as pets. A group of humans stage a daring revolt to gain their freedom but their masters initiate a series of repressive acts to maintain control. This imaginative film won numerous awards at festivals in both Europe and the United States.

#6073 Approx. 72 minutes \$19.98



The Day The Earth Stood Still

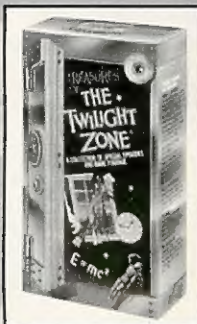
When we first started putting this collection together, this video was on everyone's list as a must to include. Made in 1951 and starring Michael Rennie, Patricia Neal and Hugh Marlow, this film finds Rennie as a visitor from another planet who is sent to warn earthlings of their self-destructive ways.

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We've been to the Moon, now let's go on to Mars.

H.G. Wells answered the eternal question "Is Mars Inhabited?" in an article of the same name for the Midwinter 1908 issue of *Cosmopolitan*. Illustration by W.R. Leigh.



WHEN I WAS YOUNG, THERE WAS LIFE ON Mars. We *believed* in Martians. One of the most terrifying movies I ever saw as a child was the George Pal production of *War of the Worlds*, which to my young eyes seemed more documentary than fiction. Every Halloween, I would listen to Orson Welles' radio adaptation of the novel, which then terrified a nation into believing that we were truly being invaded by beings from the fourth planet from the sun.

I grew up reading of Edgar Rice Burroughs' John Carter, who dueled with the four-armed Tharks, and fell in love with the Martian princess Dejah Thoris. Comic books were filled with flying saucers and science fiction was populated by little green men from Mars.

Now I have gotten older, and science fiction has as well. Pick up any of the recent science fiction novels that have appeared on the subject of Mars, or read any of the short stories that have also suddenly blossomed, and you will find no writers any longer positing a planet full of bug-eyed monsters. One writer's recent short story even sent Dan Quayle to Mars. Sometimes imagination is difficult to keep alive in the face of scientific evidence showing us that no Martians walk the Red Planet.

But this means that all of us have a mission. And you can play a part in that mission.

For since there are no Martians, it is up to us to become them.

A few decades ago, science fiction took us all to the Moon. SF did that by lighting the fire of scientific curiosity in inquisitive children, who later turned into the engineers who did the work that launched us there. It also inspired the American people into believing that it could happen. Ask any of the NASA scientists who worked on the Apollo missions. Without science fiction, without the infectious dreams of men like Robert Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, or Arthur C. Clarke, it is unlikely that any of them would have been there.

Without SF, it is unlikely that our footprints would now be spread across the lunar landscape.

But now, a third of the way through the '90s, the world seems to have forgotten the miracles of those journeys, which truly rivalled that of Columbus in their impact. It is up to us to once more nudge the country to do the right thing. It is time to take the next step.

It is time to go to Mars!

In this issue's Science Forum, I talked with three top scientists involved in the planning for a mission to Mars. You'll be surprised to see how close we really are. They all told us that the best thing the average citizen can do to aid them in their work is to lobby for space. And that the best focus for that lobbying effort is a petition being circulated by the National Space Society, which has issued a call for pioneering the space frontier by endorsing the Space Exploration Initiative, a presidential initiative supported by NASA.

I never personally made it to the Moon, and it is equally unlikely that I will be chosen to go on any Mars mission either. NASA does not tend to seek out overweight, desk-bound paper-jockeys when it comes time to choose its astronauts. But that does not matter. Whether you or I will ever go ourselves is beside the point. What matters is that as a race we make that climb to the stars. Whomever goes, goes there for all. And we need the SEI to help get us there.

The Space Exploration Initiative would give the American space program the push it needs to move forward, increasing our knowledge of the universe, eventually making available resources from space that can solve some of the most pressing problems we face here on Earth. From space, there are no boundary lines drawn between countries, and all the planet seems one. Perhaps a mission to Mars can remind the world of this fact. If you are interested in helping, please contact the National Space Society at 922 Pennsylvania Avenue S.E., Washington, DC 20003, or call them at (202) 543-1900. They'll be happy to send you more information, as well as a copy of their petition. They need a million signatures to show the government that there is truly a mandate for Mars.

I urge you to get in touch with them, and to convince your friends and acquaintances to do the same. That way, when humanity first sets foot on the Martian landscape, you'll be walking there, too.

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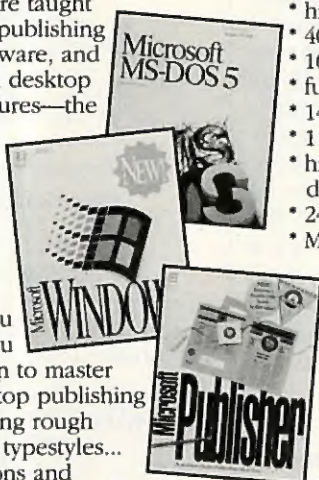
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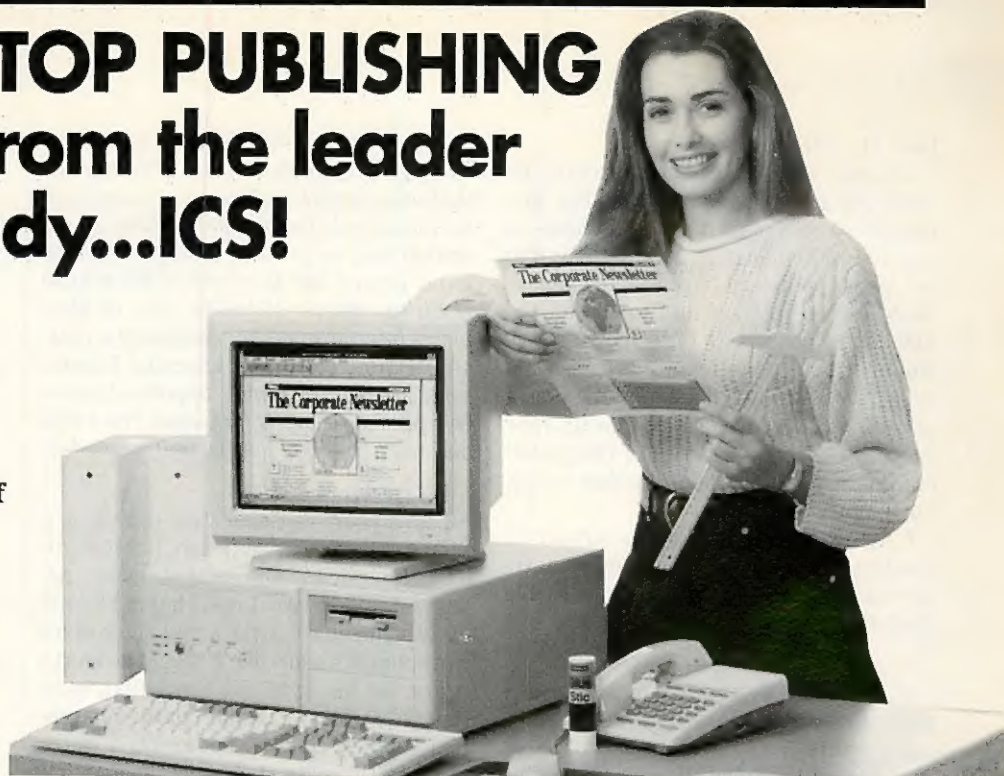
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04M

Dear Mr. Edelman:

Is Connie Hirsch's "Mirror, Mirror on the Wall" (*SF Age* #3) fantasy? I think not. The mirror—so self-named as a disguise—is actually an Artificial Intelligence, slaved to its owner, with remote sensing capability as evidenced by its ability to spy on the kingdom's people. It also possesses a rudimentary conscience: witness its deliberate decision to not inform the Queen of certain affairs unless asked directly. How it came to earth is a matter of conjecture (and perhaps the germ of another story), but fantasy? No.

I would remind readers of Arthur C. Clarke's Third Law: Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.

George Early

It seems that you—along with Clarke—each understand that any fantasy story, when viewed in the proper light, can often be as rigorously extrapolative as any of the hardest SF. It all depends on how you look at it, and from our mail, it appears as if each reader looks at it in his or her own way.

Dear Mr. Edelman:

I enjoyed your editorial on Harlan Ellison. I love reading enthusiastic recommendations of great science fiction writers' work. Mr. Ellison's essay definitely lived up to Mr. Edelman's praises. At the beginning of that essay, the bio states that Mr. Ellison "is the most honored, most controversial, as well as most talked about writer of the genre." Mr. Ellison states in his essay that he has written 1,200 stories over a 37-year career.

Here's the problem: for the last three years, my mission upon entering any bookstore, large or small (and I enter many), has been to purchase some of Harlan Ellison's work. I am usually unsuccessful. The science fiction specialty bookstore here in Chicago carries one, count it, one slim book by Mr. Ellison, co-written with another author. At that particular store there are shelves upon shelves of Asimov, Bradbury, Dickson and other more minor writers. As prolific as Mr. Ellison has been, it is strange that from East Coast to West Coast, his work is a rare find. So if Harlan Ellison is indeed "arguably one of the finest writers of our time," where is his work to prove it?

It's a shame. What's the story?

Sincerely,
Molly Melnick

It's been an unfortunate law of the publishing field that short story collections

have a far shorter shelf life than novels and trilogies and endless series. This means that writers such as Ellison, who specialize in uniquely crafted short fiction, do not tend to stay in print as long as the latest triple decker. But your search for a taste of Ellison should at last be over, as Morphoeus International has published a massive volume titled The Essential Ellison, containing 67 of his most important pieces in a package of over 1,000 pages. Track this one down and you will be well-rewarded.

Dear Editor:

I love your magazine. Not only is it a source of great science fiction, but the articles, interviews and essays make my favorite authors *real*. I read Harlan Ellison's essay on dreams. I haven't read much of his work, but it sounds like it would be worth it just for his style and conviction, even though I feel we would have opposite philosophies. That is what makes it worth reading. Diversity. A person can't realize truth if he only reads or sees one popular or politically correct viewpoint.

So now, my main reason for writing today. *Stop* the constant bickering on Fantasy in a Science Fiction magazine. I don't care to capitalize either term, but apparently some folks feel you should. Three of the four letters this month were on this topic. The other letter meant more to me than those three combined. Readers seem to think the magazine should go in just their *own* bent. I think fantasy is great even though most of my favorite authors are strictly science fiction. My one favorite is probably Piers Anthony, who does excellent fantasy *and* science fiction. So, I say, keep fantasy, but keep it to one story.

If the purgers of science fiction don't like it, they can "change the station" for a few pages. So, either way, make it policy, stand by it, and tell us *your* decision. Then you'll have people's respect, if not their agreement. And it's such a good magazine, they'll still buy it.

Aaron S. Marks

It's an impossibility (as much as we wish it weren't) for any magazine to please all of the people all of the time, so our goal is to please most of the people most of the time. The cards, letters, and sales figures tell us that we're succeeding. Thanks for the vote of support.

Readers—While we can't publish or respond to every letter, rest assured that all letters are read! Please let us know how we're doing at: Letters to the Editor, Science Fiction Age, P.O. Box 369, Damascus, MD 20872.

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BOOKS

By Michael Bishop

The latest *Full Spectrum* anthology delivers S.F. with the power of poetry.



Bantam's fourth *Full Spectrum* includes a well-balanced diversity of themes in its twenty stories. Cover art by Siudmak.

FULL SPECTRUM 4, EDITED BY LOU ARONICA, AMY Stout, and Betsy Mitchell, Bantam Books, 1993, 496 pp., trade paperback \$12.95, puts me in mind of a niftily-assembled TV variety show, like, say, a superior edition of Ed Sullivan's campy "Toast of the Town." Such pop-culture vaudevillian smorgasbords have long since given way to nutritionless sitcoms and hard-to-swallow "reality" programs. Sometimes, in fact, it seems that original SF anthologies (if lacking a merchandisable unifying theme: future war, alternate sexual orientations) have long since limped after those venerable old variety shows into divertissement extinction. Kudos, then, to *Full Spectrum's* editors (with a nod to the new *Universe* series, under Robert Silverberg and Karen Haber) for resuscitating the form and for putting together in this volume such a well-balanced diversity of themes and approaches.

What you will principally miss in *Full Spectrum 4* (a real flaw in my variety-show metaphor) is light-heartedness. Even its "funny" stories—I reckon them as "The Googleplex Comes and Goes" by Del Stone, Jr., "Suicidal Tendencies" by Dave Smeds, and "The Death of John Patrick Yoder" by Nancy Kress—release unignorable floods of mordancy, as the titles themselves may suggest. Largely, though, the stories herein gain sparkle and maybe even depth from their artful placement, an arrangement triggering zingy dialogues, if not outright noisy flaps, among them: interactive

solos for nearly every taste.

In an introduction to *The Best American Short Stories 1992*, Robert Stone observes, "A tale requires a voice, a quality of sound in the mind's ear. Every word has its resonance, and a story is told word upon word. At its best, a story emerges as something quite close to poetry, demanding an equally intimate blend of effective form and content . . . Its essentials are vividness, clarity, economy, and precision." Possibly three-quarters of *Full Spectrum's* score of stories strive for, and half almost achieve, this sort of poetry, the best hitting two or more of Stone's prescribed essentials. And every selection, to repeat a crucial point, sings more stirringly because of its placement and its unique input to the whole.

If *Full Spectrum 4* has one fortuitous unifying theme, I would suggest this: *what it means to encounter or to embody the other*, whether that other materializes as outsider, outlander, machine, extraterrestrial, spirit, woman, or even—dare I say it?—man. Ursula K. Le Guin's opening contribution, "Fragments from the Women's Writing," introduces this "theme" and emerges as poetry because, in imaginatively liberating a forbidden female script from its sprung Song Dynasty Chinese, she strings together sixty-some concise and moving verses. "Sister: I am lonely. Write"—her final line—segues neatly into L. Timmel Duchamp's tough-girl SF tale, "Motherhood, Etc.," about a young woman who becomes a functional hermaphrodite by a clandestine extraterrestrial agency. This corny thesis, whose unlikelihood Duchamp admits and struggles to deflect with not one but *three* references to the *National Enquirer*, undermines her story as a big-league human document, but fails to sabotage my hunch that Duchamp has kegs of undecanted talent.

The next four stories—Bonita Kale's "The Saints," A.R. Morlan's "The Best Lives of Our Years," John M. Landsberg's koanlike "Embodied in Its Opposite," and "Foreigners" by Mark Rich—treat in turn the missionary impulse (among simple but stubborn Quechua idolators), the spendthrift stupidity of war (among day-after-tomorrow armies of mostly female combatants), the ultimate enigmas of existence (among inscrutable aliens who value honor over life), and the institutionalized persecution of Otherness (by supposedly intelligent people whose ignorance and insecurity engender paranoia). Eleanor, the protagonist of "The Saints," throws into relief the heartbreaking loneliness of the women in Le Guin's poem; likewise, the women in Morlan's ingenious war story reflect something of the hard-bitten sexual edginess of Pat Morrow in "Motherhood, Etc."

Meanwhile, Landsberg's "Embodied in Its Opposite," ending with imprisonment and death on a far planet, slides deftly into Rich's "Foreigners," which begins with its narrator's release from confinement and moves to show his efforts to naturalize himself in

"Give it up, Joe. You can't shoot holes in their offer."



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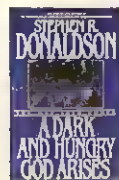
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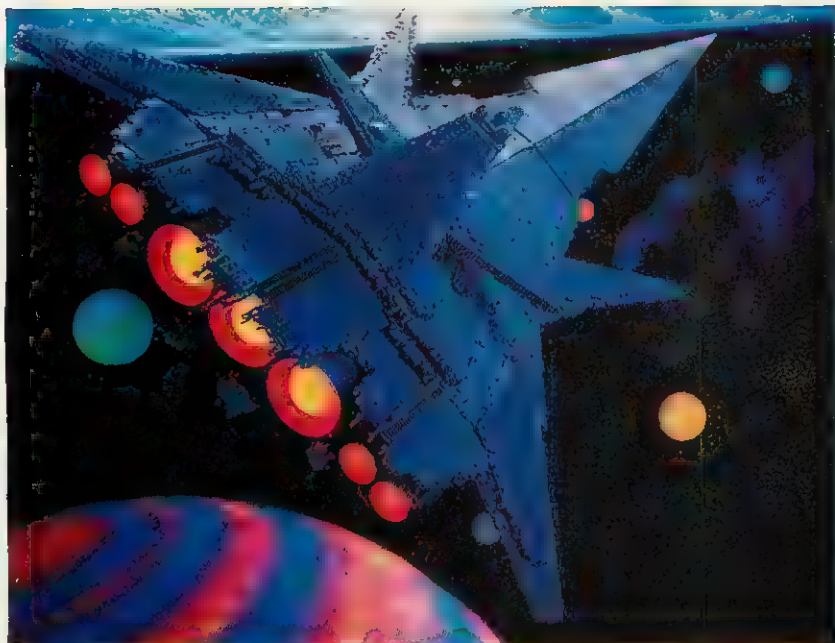
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another's affections. The Landsberg and the Rich connect, then, like sides of the same rapidly flipping coin. Although he appears to confuse the words *acquit* and *pardon*, I like Landsberg's "Embodied in Its Opposite" better than any other story in the book—for its economy, its strangeness, and its killer indeterminateness. An offbeat choice? Maybe, but SF evolved for stories like this.

The best long story (a bit too long, I think), "The Beauty Addict" by Ray Aldridge, picks up from "Foreigners" and maybe even "Motherhood, Etc." the theme of what truly distinguishes a human being from an alien, or a woman from either an alien or a man. Aldridge's wonder tale recalls early Roger Zelazny ("A Rose for Ecclesiastes"), George R.R. Martin's plummier SF love stories, and the colorful off-world romantic angst of Gardner R. Dozois's "Strangers." It has craft, polish, and a modicum of heart; it seems sufficiently reader-friendly to cop award nominations, if not the trophies themselves. Why, though, do I feel that an earlier avatar of Aldridge could have written this story 20 years ago?

On *Full Spectrum 4*'s contents page, I've asterisked seven more stories, including "The Mind's Place" by Gregory Feeley, a philosophical voyage-through-space tale that on at least one point deconstructs the presumed technological premises (among them, that "nanodocs" and memory dumps will deliver us from physical death) of the previous story, "Suicidal Tendencies" by Dave Smeds. Smeds, however, shoots for black comedy, vim, and bite; Feeley, for density, psychological verisimilitude, and the idea of communal, as opposed to individual, rebirth. Both writers succeed.

My last five asterisked stories are "Ah, Bright Wings" by Howard V. Hendrix, a tale of love, intrigue, and computer-nerd transcendence; "The Erl-King" by Elizabeth Hand, an evocatively written near-future horror story with a couple of hair-raising Dickensian (or Wilkie-Collinsian) twists; "The Death of John Patrick Yoder" by Nancy Kress, in which obituaries begin noting the demise of modern facsimiles of T.S. Eliot's hollow men; "Human, Martian—One, Two, Three," Kevin J. Anderson's exciting Frederic Pohl-style take on the colonization of the red planet; and David Brin's "What Continues, What Fails," a lesson in both theology and the astrophysics of black holes.

Other readers, meanwhile, will surely find the quirky solos of Del Stone, Jr. ("The Googleplex Comes and Goes"), Stephen R. Donaldson ("The Woman Who Loved Pigs"), Martha Soukup ("The Story So Far"), Jean-Claude Dunyach ("In Medicis Gardens," translated from the French by Dominique Bennett), Bruce Holland Rogers ("Vox Domini"), and Danith McPherson ("The Roar at the Heart of the World")

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exactly to their tastes. In fact, two or three of these may have warranted discussion here.

Judging by Robert Stone's four "essentials," let me end by saying that the strongest stories in this *Full Spectrum* have vividness and clarity in plenty, and precision often enough to intercept most brickbats. In my view, though, economy surfaces only in Ursula Le Guin's poem, Bonita Kale's "The Saints," Del Stone, Jr.'s weird alien-invasion riff, and John M. Landsberg's exemplary "Embodied in Its Opposite." Nevertheless, the whole program, performance by performance, hangs together splendidly, giving back both heft and shimmer.

Provocative addendum:

Thomas Disch in an interview with Paul Di Filippo: "When I have writing students, I always talk about 'generic detail.' It's the death of fiction. Generic detail is, 'He looked at his wristwatch.' Precise detail is, 'He looked at his Casio.' There's more information there."

L. Timmel Duchamp in "Motherhood, Etc.": "Sam checks his Casio."

Forward the Foundation, by Isaac Asimov, Doubleday, 1993, 417 pgs., hardcover, \$23.50.

In every capsule review of Isaac Asimov's career, you will find a mention that he wrote a guide to Shakespeare. There are probably some who intend this linking of "The Good Doctor" to "The Bard" as ironic. Certainly no reader will ever confuse their prose styles, but Asimov's novels owed a lot to Shakespeare, and *Forward the Foundation* owed as much as any.

Completed shortly before his death, *Forward the Foundation* is the seventh Foundation novel (*Foundation*, 1951; *Foundation and Empire*, 1952; *Second Foundation*, 1953; *Foundation's Edge*, 1982; *Foundation and Earth*, 1986; and *Prelude to Foundation*, 1988 are the others) and follows the life of Hari Seldon from his middle years as a professor of mathematics at Streeling University on Trantor until his death in his 80s as the Creator of the Foundation.

Asimov spent the 1980s linking his three great fictional Universes—The Robot Stories, Empire Series, and the Foundation Trilogy—into a single background. Thus it was that in *Foundation's Edge*, he revealed that robots had placed humanity in the Foundation Galaxy to keep it safe from other forms of intelligent life. *Forward the Foundation* continues this linking, with the robots taking an active interest in psychohistory and Hari Seldon.

When the action opens, it has been eight years since Hari Seldon presented his paper on psychohistory to the Decennial Convention and came to the attention of Eto Demerzel, the Empire's First Minister who happens to be a robot with the appearance of a human. The Human Empire was

(and remains) in decline. Eto's powerful office and robot skill can slow the fall, but they can't avert the crash. In psychohistory, Eto saw a way to save humanity, so he befriended Hari, gave him a position at the University from which he could continue his work, and assigned him a guardian, another human-appearing robot named Dors Venabili. Hari and Dors have fallen in love, married, and adopted a child.

The book begins with the first threat to Hari's fledgling psychohistory, the demagogue Laskin Joranum, who seeks to depose Eto, Hari's protector, and subvert Raych Seldon, Hari's adopted son. This first section shows the neatest bit of plotting in the book as Eto, Hari, Dors, and Raych all appear unable to stop Joranum because his scheme turns the strengths of their offices, skills, and loyalties against them. Psychohistory is too young to offer any help, and in the end Hari must match his own intelligence and intuition against Joranum's campaign.

The second section begins ten years later. After Eto's retirement at the end of the first section, Hari was appointed to replace him as First Minister to the Emperor. Now the Joranumites are back and it is Hari that they want out of the way. Again psychohistory is little help, and Hari, Dors, and Raych must again trust their own plans. This time they are less successful and the fall of the Empire begins in earnest.

The third section finds Hari back at the University, now in charge of the Psychohistory Research Project. Another ten years have passed, Raych has married and fathered a child of his own, a very special girl named Wanda. It is a dream of Wanda's that puts Dors on the trail of an internal struggle for control of psychohistory and the latest threat to Hari's life. Before she can prevail, Dors must overcome the hostility of her family and the limits imposed by her own robot programming.

The last section of the book has very little plot compared to the others. It is the story of Hari Seldon at 70. He is a man who has seen the deaths of his friends, of his wife, and of his children, but who struggles on to complete his dream and to save his race. From the previous six books, we know Hari's dream will succeed, but these 100 pages deal with the price that he pays.

In all four sections, it is not hard work to see the influence of Shakespeare in Asimov's settings and plots. In telling his stories of political and personal empires and the people who seek to build and control them, Asimov was no more concerned with the daily lives and worlds of his heroes than Shakespeare was. While Raych struggles with his duty to his father, we have no more idea of his previous day to day concerns than we had of Hamlet's. That is to say, we know the broad outlines, but have only hints at the details.

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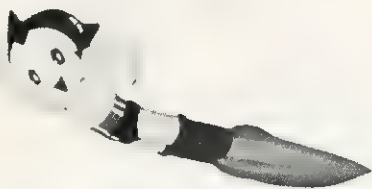
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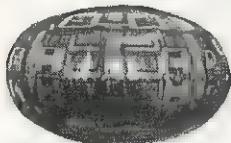
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Asimov's concern was
with his characters and
their interplay, not with
their environment. Just as
Shakespeare's characters
wore the garb of Elizabe-
than England whether
they were playing Roman
soldiers or Italian nobles, so
Asimov's characters are
completely recognizable to
us despite the fact that
they live thousands of
years away from us. Asi-
mov's prose makes no attempt to make the
future strange; it contains none of Rucker's
eyeball kicks, or Gibson's neologisms, or
Bear's extrapolations. You can follow Hari
Seldon's trials without ever being distracted
by the feeling that you are no longer
in Kansas.

Forward the Foundation is true to other
Shakespearean conventions. For instance,
there is the emphasis on personal combat.
Every section of the novel contains at least

*Asimov's con-
cern was with
his characters
and their
interplay, not
with their
environment.*

one street brawl, all of
which begin with bare
hands against great odds.
Dors and Raych even man-
age to defeat gun wielding
foes. Again and again, the
heros prove themselves not
only smarter than their
enemies, but physically
superior as well.

Forward contains solilo-
quies, those long passages
of internal and external
debate on the nature of

history, humanity, government, and robots.
It has witty dialogues and low comedy, wise
peasants and foppish nobles. Like the best
of Shakespeare, *Forward* is about struggle
and triumph, and ultimately tragedy.

Unfortunately, because *Forward the
Foundation* was Isaac Asimov's last book,
it is also about Isaac. It is not a reviewer's
place to guess what the author was think-
ing when he wrote, but a reviewer has to
comment on what a book brings to his own

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pros think are the very best.

mind, and it is impossible to read Asimov's epilogue without thinking of the man himself.

Only four pages long, the book's epilogue finds Hari Seldon in his 80s, alone in his office with his work, reflecting on his life, missing his companions, wondering if did the right things, wondering if he has made the difference. This comes at the end of a book which Asimov dedicated to his readers. I read three of the good bye letters that Asimov wrote for the various magazines in which he appeared. None of them struck me as hard as these four pages devoted to Hari Seldon.

In his last book, "The Good Doctor" did alright by his finest creation.

Eric T. Baker

Arthur C. Clarke: The Authorized Biography, by Neil McAleer, *Contemporary Books*, 1993, 430 pages, hard-cover, \$25.

In February of 1972, Arthur C. Clarke, then 44, cracked his head against a door frame and suffered a spinal injury that left him paralyzed for months. The event gets a chapter in Neil McAleer's biography, which draws heavily on Clarke's own account in *The Treasure of the Great Reef*. "Although I could breathe without much trouble when perfectly relaxed, the slightest exertion left me gasping. I could not speak more than two or three words without panting for breath. Having my faced washed was a frightful ordeal; I could barely endure the brief passage of the suffocating sponge over my nose." At the end of this passage, McAleer speaks in his own voice for the first time. McAleer says: "He wouldn't be seeing the Great Bases Reef soon—that was certain."

Authorized biographies offer peculiar strengths and weaknesses: in return for the cooperation of the subject (or more commonly, the subject's estate), the biographer invariably surrenders some measure of critical independence. Sometimes the great man retains the right of approval over the manuscript (as Nabokov was granted for Andrew Field's ill-fated first biography); sometimes the biographer is selected by the estate, which raises all the questions that come to mind when a politician names the journalist who will interview him. In exchange, however, the biographer has access to papers, freedom to quote letters, and ready entree to the subject's friends and family, who might balk at talking to an "unauthorized" biographer. Authorized biographies are valuable, but rarely become definitive.

Biographies written while their subject is still alive possess similar liabilities and assets. While they sacrifice perspective, they are closer to their sources than later writers can get: the subject's contemporaries are around to be interviewed, perhaps even some older relatives or teachers. Hilary Mills's biography of Norman Mailer, while it will never become a classic even among books on Mailer, has material no later scholar could gather.

Neil McAleer's life of Arthur C. Clarke is an authorized biography, written with its subject's genial cooperation, and is very much an example of both genres. Here are no "lost years," no places where the biographer must speculate as to why his author abandoned a book or made an odd decision. But there is no speculation here of any sort: what McAleer has been given (and there is a lot of it: letters, interviews, a blizzard of clippings) is all he has thought to want. If there is anything Clarke wishes to keep from posterity, McAleer has shown no interest in it.

Another kind of biography is the "documentary biography," and although McAleer does not use this term, it is perhaps the one most appropriate to his book. His text contains a higher proportion of extended quotations than any biography I have seen, as though McAleer were content simply to let the letters, recollections, and news clippings tell the story, with the biographer stepping in only to arrange the material and provide connective tissue. Documentary biographies are valuable, too (we have probably now gotten, for example, all the interest-

ing passages from Clarke's letters, unless there are love letters he did not tell McAleer about), but their shape, the interpretation they take, is dictated by the outlines of the documentary record.

All of which is a roundabout way of saying that *Arthur C. Clarke: The Authorized Biography* is valuable primarily for the research McAleer has done, which will be mined by any future Clarke biographers. As a work of art—in the sense that Macaulay thought of biographies as literature, the sense in which Carlyle called a biography "a heroic poem of its sort"—the work is an embarrassment. McAleer (who is the author of five previous books, including an SF novel called *Earthlove: A Space Fantasy*), writes in a gushing style rarely seen in book form, full of italics, exclamation points, and one-sentence paragraphs, that more resembles a publicist's release than a literary biography.

"Ten days—that's all Clarke had at home before he was off to Saudi Arabia for the

*Neil McAleer's
life of Arthur
C. Clark is an
authorized
biography,
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- The fevered brain of Jean "Moebius" Giraud has boiled over into a new hard-cover collection from Epic Comics which includes images from previous publications as well as from his private notebooks. *Metallic Memories* (96 pages, \$18.95) breaks the Moebius oeuvre into four sections.



"Alien Artifacts" features genre-bending visuals of aliens, dinosaurs, and other fantasy figures. "Forbidden Lands" takes us to strange environments, from the neighborhood bar which just happens to be populated by aliens to Roger Zelazny's *Damnation Alley*. "Screaming Stars" carries us aboard arcane spacecraft for travel to surreal and implausible worlds. "Erotic Dreams" explores the artist's sensual attraction for the polymorphously perverse.

Look for this volume at comic shops and other specialty bookstores.

- The name of Harvey Jacobs could be filed under W for "Whatever Became Of..." for most science fiction fans, as many of his recent fabulations have been published in places such as *Playboy*, *Esquire*, *Cosmopolitan*, *The Paris Review* and other mainstream magazines. Now Jacobs has returned to the fold. His newest novel, *Beautiful Soup: A Novel for the 21st Century* (Celadon Press, trade paperback, \$12.95, 272 pages) shows us a future out of Aldous Huxley, entwined with the wit and humor of early Kurt Vonnegut. In this dystopia, children are coded at birth with the outer limits of their potential, beyond which they will not be allowed to pass, in a society that has traded individualism for the chance at eternal peace. It doesn't work (these trade-offs never do), but the trip James Wander takes through this strange world shows us that it is a fascinating place to visit. □

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TELEVISION

By M.C. Valada

Step through George R.R. Martin's *Doorways* into alternate worlds.

Cat, an alien from an alternate universe (played by Anne Le Guernec) must use the mysterious doorways to travel from world to world to escape the deadly Manhounds.



IT WAS EARLY JUNE IN LOS ANGELES WHEN I received the call from George R.R. Martin. Martin, the author of *Fevre Dream*, editor of *Wild Cards*, and writer/story editor/producer on *Beauty and the Beast*, was in town as the creator and executive producer of a TV pilot with the working title of *Doorways* for Columbia Pictures Television and ABC-TV. I had met Martin in New Orleans in 1988, when I photographed him for the first time for the Portrait Gallery, which has been exhibited at the World Science Fiction Convention every year since 1989.

He asked if I might be interested in spending a couple of days photographing the production so he would be able to deliver slide shows on the convention circuit during the summer.

"The 'doors' are gateways between alternate Earths," he told me, explaining the basic premise of the show. "The pilot opens as a wild, half-feral young woman named Cat appears from nowhere in the middle of an LA freeway one night. After she is injured blowing up an approaching truck with a mysterious hand weapon, the police take her to a local hospital, where she becomes involved with Tom Mason, an E.R. resident who treats her and helps her escape. They also meet Trager, a federal investigator, who is very interested in Cat and her weapon.

"In time we learn that Cat is a fugitive from another timeline, who fled to this world through a 'door' to escape the aliens who had destroyed human civilization in her own version of Earth. As Cat attempts to evade the tracking alien 'manhounds,' Tom is dragged through another 'door' with Cat and discovers that the 'doors' only go one way. So Tom has no choice but to accompany Cat on her quest, meeting each world as it comes and trying to stay one step ahead of the 'manhound' Thane, who had taken Cat as his mate in their timeline."

It sounded like great fun.

"Sure, George. Starting when?"

"Tomorrow."

This is Hollywood, and without the proper channels being followed, there is no way that a non-union photographer can work on a union set—and my 15 years of professional experience in Washington, D.C. doesn't count for anything here. So we got permission for me to shoot as long as the photographs were only used for other than commercial purposes. Which is why you aren't seeing any of my photographs with this article.

George gave me directions to a rendezvous point north of the San Fernando Valley where the cast and crew would be filming the next day. He met me there and then drove me the rest of the way to the actual location, near an old highway in the hills near Santa Clara.

The first thing I saw were a number of trailers. Some served as the location dressing rooms for the cast; others were used to store costumes, props and equipment. There were very few people around: almost everyone else was filming a little further away and we had to wait for a shuttle van to take us to the actual shooting location. While we waited, George told me how the series came to be.

"It began essentially in August of 1991. I had some pitch meetings scheduled at the networks as pitch season, pilot season was opening up, and I had a couple of show ideas that I wanted to pitch that I'd had for some time. My agent at the time, Jody Levine, suggested that I come up with something else, because I only had two ideas and she thought three would be better.

"As I was flying out to the meetings, the notion of *Doorways* came to me. I pitched it to three networks in one week, and that was the one that everybody responded to. ABC moved faster than the other two networks, made an offer for it the first day I was home. So within three days of going there, they commissioned a pilot script. At that point I had to hook up with a studio, so I took the project to Columbia Pictures Television to Jim Crocker, who I had worked with on *Twilight Zone*. He was the other executive producer on this.

"It was partly the concept," Martin explained, as he told me how the idea blossomed in his head. "I had

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the concept fairly early. The parallel universe idea is something that hasn't really been done in science fiction television very much. It's a growing sub-genre of prose science fiction. I think there are more parallel and alternate history kinds of books published every year. Those stories have become quite an important subgenre of the prose field.

"Also, the character came to me, particularly the character Cat, and the opening scene, which I saw very vividly, and I think was the first thing that I began all my pitches with—the scene of Cat standing in the middle of the Los Angeles Freeway during rush hour while the cars whizzed by her, missing her by inches, while the lights came out and people leaned on their horns. It just seemed a very arresting image and indeed it proved to be so, I think."

George then noticed that his male lead was standing nearby and took me over to a trailer to meet George Newbern, who plays physician Tom Lake. George Newbern has appeared as Dixie Carter's son on *Designing Women* and as the groom in Steve Martin's *Father of the Bride*. He has definite teenage heartthrob potential: he's very photogenic and also very nice. In the pilot, Cat leads Tom away from our reality to a world where all petro-chemical products were destroyed by a genetically engineered bacterium. George wanted to keep the suspense about the differences between our world and those portrayed in future episodes.



The manhound Dyana (Signy Coleman) is zapped to prevent her from prematurely killing Cat and spoiling evil Darklord's revenge.

"I don't want to give them all away," he said. "I'll tell you one, the script that I'm working on now. I've done this one where Texas never joined the Union and instead developed as an independent republic. So we pick up 1993, and Texas controls most of the west of North America. We've had some fun with that."

A van finally came back to home base to take George Martin and me to the shooting location where Co-Executive Producer/Director Peter Werner (*Hiroshima, LBJ: The Early Years, Moonlighting*) was

working with the cast. We arrived in time to see two brief scenes completed. In one, Cat has an exchange with Cissy, a teenaged girl whom she has just helped. In the other, Cissy runs away from a group of "bikers" who are trying to catch and rape her. As is often the case, the scenes are shot out of sequence from their actual use in the film.

Cat is portrayed by Anne LeGuerec, a classically-trained French stage actress who has not previously worked in the United States. She's handsome, and her looks and

SPACE RANGERS PUTS THE ACCENT ON ACTION

Television's SF boom continues with the recently aired *Space Rangers*, the CBS contribution to the cosmic ratings race. *Rangers* details the adventures of a rag-tag group of space cops whose beat is literally out of this world. They're misfits, they're unconventional, and have to battle budget cuts as well as bad guys.

"I love underdogs," declares series creator Pen Desham, speaking about his characters, "people with an ironic chivalry to them." While talking from his Los Angeles office, the writer/producer/director freely credits CBS President and colleague Jeff Sajansky with getting the concept off the ground.

"He wanted to reinvigorate the hour-long format on prime time, yet he wanted something larger than the only thing doing well, the crime/cop adventure.

After some brainstorming, Desham pitched four different ideas to CBS, including the premise that later became *Space Rangers*. "At the time," Desham remembers, "I called it *Planet Busters*. It had a dedicated group of lawmen/cops/marines who had to go off and solve prob-



According to creator Pen Desham, *Space Rangers* is "down and dirty" SF.

lems in a far region of outer space; in other words, a frontier. Sort of a 'Foreign Legion' in space."

The hero of what is basically an ensemble cast is Boon (Jeff Kaake), the standard handsome swashbuckling leader. Then there's a statuesque blonde, Jo Jo Thorson (Marjorie Monaghan), who's tough and self-reliant, yet still feminine. Academy-award winner Linda Hunt (the only "name" actor in the cast) plays base commander Channault.

The oddballs kick in with the flight engineer Doc (Jack McGee), who has so many artificial body parts, some might call him a cyborg. "I don't think of him as a cyborg," Desham protests with a laugh, "but just a guy who got shot up a lot, and was replaced with a lot of junk." He also seems to be the resident comic; in one episode, Doc, about to work with an android, says that he's "looking forward to working with anything more metal than me!"

Another oddball is Mimer (Clint Howard), the alien specialist, a man so fascinated with his subject, he's something of an absent-minded professor. It's fitting that Howard is an alien specialist, because in the original *Star Trek* series, he was one. In the first season episode "The Corbomite Maneuver," he was Balok, a seemingly sinister, yet ultimately friendly, being.

Like any SF show, the final product is a collaborative effort. The makeup effects are being handled by Marvin Westmore. The visual effects have been handled by a number of individuals and companies, including ILM (Industrial Light and Magic,

accent contribute to the illusion that she is not of this earth. Cat is still learning to communicate and her command of our language improves during the course of the story. She also appears to be wearing an unusual bracelet, which turns out to be something much more than that.

In contrast to the alien Cat, Cissy is an all-American kid: a freckled strawberry blonde, about as big around as a stick, who looks about 15. Cissy is played by Tisha Putnam, a young actress who is a casting director's dream—she's actually over 18. Tisha is exuberant and seemed to be causing a bit of a stir because she insisted on doing her own stunt work (not an encouraged activity in Hollywood). Tisha is also a science fiction and comics fan who was thrilled to be working with George R.R. Martin on the project.

During a break for lunch, George and I had a chance to discuss his success in both the fields of prose and film-making. "They're certainly different forms," said Martin. "There are some things you can do in prose that you can't do in film. Certainly prose is always going to be my first love. Some ideas are clearly one or the other. Sometimes for marketing reasons and some other times for aesthetic, literary reasons. Certainly the market reasons are predominant.

"I have a fantasy novel I've been working on off and on for awhile. It clearly has to be a novel. Sure, I could develop it as
Continued on page 72

the George Lucas "Dream factory") and an outfit called Stargate.

In a way, Desham seems to want *Space Rangers* to be an antidote to the sometimes pretentious, "metaphysical" messages of shows like *Star Trek: TNG*. "Star Trek," bemoans Desham, "treats its subjects with a kind of 'white collar' sanctity. It also can get rather slow. But I wanted our show to get funky, and down and dirty. If *Star Trek* is classical music, we are rock and roll!"

The accent in *Space Rangers* is on action, and relatively low-tech action at that. "I don't read SF much anymore," Desham concedes, "but when I was younger, I liked stories by such writers as Robert Sheckley. He wrote quite a few stories about characters who were landing on planets, and had to face quite a few challenges, and *invent* solutions."

Finally, Pen Desham says, "As a TV medium, SF must be approachable to its audience. A good story can make us learn something about ourselves. That's what we hope to do with *Space Rangers*."

NOTE: *Rangers* recently aired the last of its original episodes. CBS will soon decide whether the series was successful enough to continue. **Eric Niderost**

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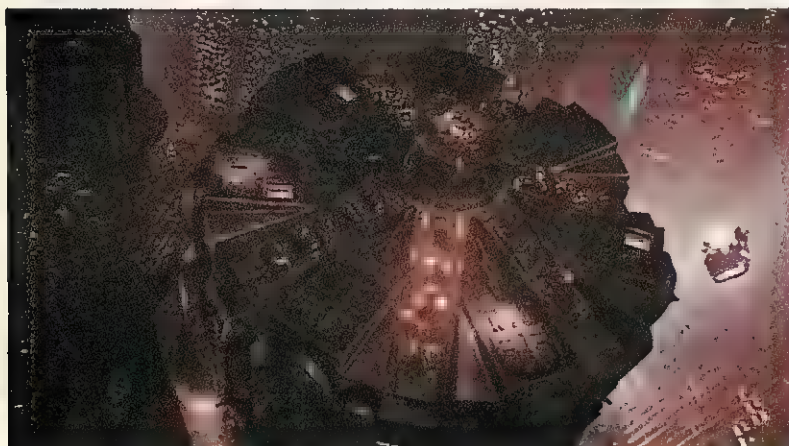
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ESSAY

By Robert Silverberg

To much of the rest of the world, America is Science Fiction.



A gritty view of future Los Angeles from the film Blade Runner. America's future will be quite different than much of the rest of the world.

WHILE I SLEEP, THE VIDEO CASSETTE RECORDER is taping the 3 a.m. showing of *Godfather III* on Home Box Office. I'll watch it some rainy Sunday afternoon a couple of months from now, probably fast-forwarding through the gorier parts. A couple of hours later, the digital solid-state clock radio awakens me in my hillside home near San Francisco with some Vivaldi, and I leave my electrically heated water bed and have an early breakfast of bacon and English muffins, purchased months ago and stored in my home freezer until yesterday. Though I have an early plane to catch, I remember a business detail I should have taken care of the day before, and I hit a couple of buttons on my push-button telephone. The automatic dialer responds to the programmed code and my agent's telephone rings in a suburb of New York. All I get is his answering machine, though: he's already on his way to the office. No problem. I tap out a different code and in a moment hear his familiar voice coming to me from the cellular phone in his car. It comes through with perfect clarity, traveling by ricochet off one of the communications satellites high up in orbit around the Earth. I ask him something about a recent contract for British publication of one of my books, but—uncharacteristically—he doesn't have the answer at the tip of his tongue. "Hang on a second," he tells me, and puts me on hold while he phones his Manhattan office—it's just the push of a button to make a second line available—to get the information from his assistant. The assistant, after a quick computer check of my contract file, pops the document in question into the fax and shoots a copy to my agent in his car, and he gives me the answer while driving to work.

(If he and I had signed up for videophone service, I suppose he could just have held the fax up to the camera and let me see the information for myself. But videophone service is still pretty expensive and neither of us is quite that gadget-oriented.)

Time to hit the road. I get into my car and make my way through a maze of freeways to the airport, where I board the hourly shuttle for Los Angeles. During the short flight I catch up on some of my bookkeeping, using the laptop computer I've brought along. By mid-morning I'm in the vast complex that is Los Angeles International Airport. I present my credit card at the car-rental desk, sign the computer-printed rental agreement that comes popping almost immediately out of the slot, and head for the 60-story high-rise where I'm meeting with the movie moguls. "We like the way you write," one of them tells me cheerily. "Some really terrific stories here." And she waves a CD-ROM disk at me: Hollywood people won't bother with mere printed books if there's some glitzier way to read a story. The CD-ROM collection, which was published a few months back, contains 50 of my best stories, some of them written so long ago that I actually used a manual typewriter to compose them instead of the already somewhat old-fashioned computer that I work on these days, along with a video interview of me and a lot of bibliographical stuff.

The conference goes pretty well. Afterward I do a little shopping in the five-story underground mall beneath the office building and pick up something I've been looking for for some time—the complete organ music of Bach on 12 compact disks, a package no bigger than a small dictionary. Then off to the airport for the 4 o'clock flight to Northern California, and by dinner-time I'm home, after a busy but not really unusual day.

Not so very long ago, of course, days like that were science fiction, and science fiction set in the 21st or 22nd centuries, at that. I began reading science fiction in about 1948, and writing it five or six years later, which means that I've seen a lot of what I've read about and written about turn into fact. Is it any surprise that almost wherever I look today, I see things that give me the weird sensation of having stepped into a science fiction story?

By way of contrast, now:

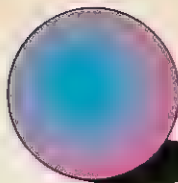
I was in Tunisia a few years back—a third world country, but not in any way "primitive"—and did a dumb thing. I thought my flight from Tunis to Rome was supposed to leave on Saturday, but actually it went on Friday afternoon—a fact that I discovered, to my chagrin, on Friday night.

I was then about 60 miles south of Tunis, the capital city, at a beach resort. If I had been 60 miles south of New York, or 60 miles south of Los Angeles, a couple of quick phone calls or faxes would have fixed everything up and I'd have had a seat on the Saturday flight. But I was 60 miles south of Tunis when I set about the job of undoing my stupidity.

No phones in the hotel room. Went to the front desk, asked them to call the Tunis airport for me. Old-fashioned rotary phone. Airport line is busy. It stays

Continued on page 37

Kim Poor • Robert McCall • David Hardy
 Bob Eggleton • Alan Gutierrez • Alan Bean
 Michael Carroll • Pamela Lee • Joe Bergeron
 Dennis Davidson • Joe Tucciarone
 Marilyn Flynn • Wm. K. Hartmann
 John Foster • Pat Rawlings & others



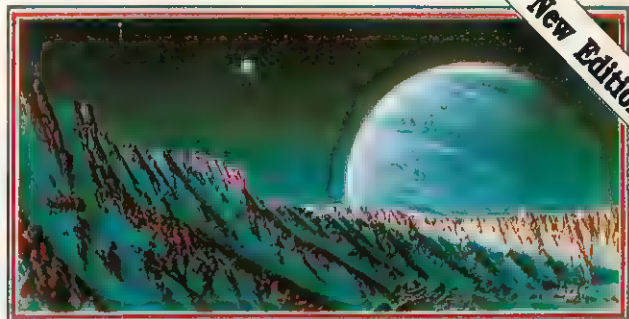
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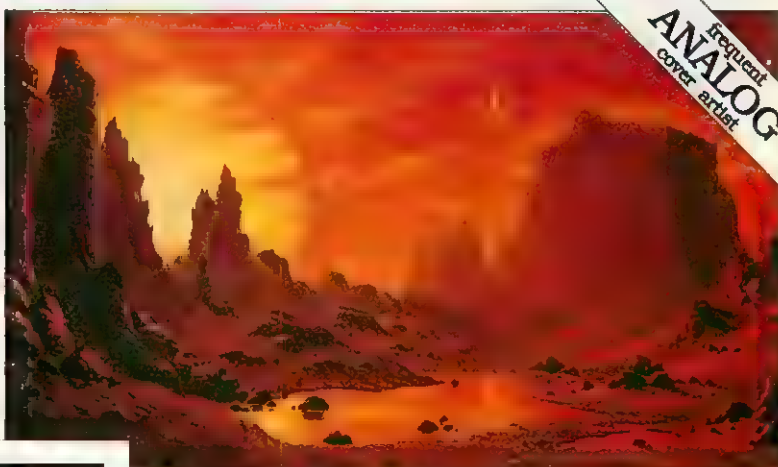
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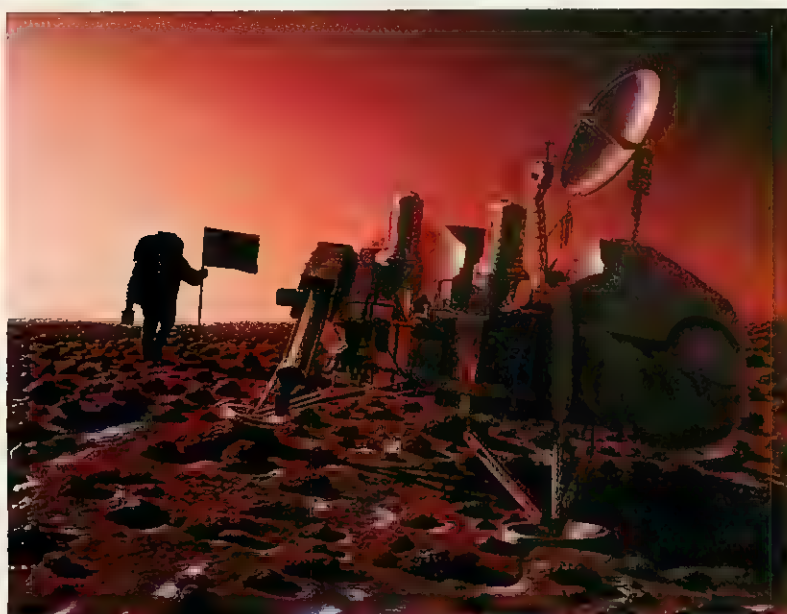
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SCIENCE

By Beason, Landis and Zubrin

Mars mission scientists say that the Red Planet is within our reach.



In the distant future, once we have become the Martians, a contingent approaches the ruins of the Viking II Mars lander, which touched down at Utopia Planitia in 1976. Visualization by NASA artist Pat Rawlings.

EVER SINCE THE FIRST CAVE DWELLER STARED UP into the night sky, humanity has dreamed of travel to other planets. Science fiction has long posited a future wherein travel to Mars is as easy as a trip to the corner store. This issue we link together three top scientists/science fiction writers to discuss the state of our mission to the fourth planet. In speaking with these three scientists working on planning aspects of America's mission to Mars, we have learned that science fiction may be turning into science fact sooner than you'd think.

Geoffrey Landis is a research scientist at Sverdrup Technology on permanent assignment to N.A.S.A. Lewis Research Center. His current research topic is to develop scientific instrumentation for an upcoming unmanned Mars probe, and he has published over a dozen scientific papers on the subject of Mars missions. He is also a Hugo- and Nebula-award winning science fiction writer; his collaborative story "The Cost of Styxite" was featured in our second issue.

Doug Beason works for the President's Science Advisor at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. He was a member of the Synthesis Group, a national commission led by astronaut Tom Stafford to provide the Vice President options for sending humans back to the Moon and on to Mars. He has had six novels published, including *The Trinity Paradox*, which holds the distinction of being the first work of fiction ever nominated for the American Physics Society "International Forum Award" for promoting the understanding of physics in society.

Robert Zubrin is a Senior Engineer with the Advanced Concepts Group of Martin-Marietta Astro-

nautics in Denver. He is the author of over 30 technical and non-technical papers in the field, and is a member of Martin-Marietta's "scenario development team," charged with developing broad new strategies for space exploration. His "Mars direct" proposal for a near-term manned Mars mission has attracted a great deal of attention from aerospace engineers and received front page coverage in *Aerospace America* and *The Journal of the British Interplanetary Society*.

SF AGE: My first question is—why Mars? Why not Venus? What is it about Mars that has captured our imagination?

LANDIS: Venus is an unlivable hell. People may someday go there, but not in our lifetimes. Mars, at least, won't bake us. It will take life support, but we won't die immediately.

ZUBRIN: Mars is the planet that may have been a home for life in the past, and the one that we can most readily transform to be a home for life—terrestrial life this time—again.

SF AGE: Did we know that though, when we first started dreaming of Mars?

ZUBRIN: We thought so.

LANDIS: I think when we started dreaming of Mars we thought it much more Earth-like than we now know.

BEASON: Mars is really the only place around that is most like Earth—and because of that, it will be able to tell us what might happen to Earth. We can probably glean a lot of information about our past as well.

SF AGE: When did we first start *seriously* considering going, in a scientific manner?

LANDIS: It has been a theme in science fiction for a long time, but Werner Von Braun was one of the first to make engineering plans. He was inspired by the SF book *Auf Zwei Planeten* by Kurt Lasswitz.

ZUBRIN: He envisioned a flotilla of winged three-stage rocketships driven by chemical rockets and carrying a total expeditionary complement of 70.

SF AGE: And by what decade did he predict that technology would catch up with his plans?

ZUBRIN: He thought that the technology was more or less available, in the sense that no really futuristic technology was included.

SF AGE: He thought *he* could do it, then?

BEASON: It's not driven by technology. It's driven by political considerations, economic mostly. We probably could have gone in the late '60s, or early '70s... if we'd *wanted* to. And that's the point.

SF AGE: So the same thing that stopped us, stopped him?

ZUBRIN: Certainly. He drew up a more realistic plan in the late 1960s, identical in fact to the one adopted by the recent Synthesis group.

LANDIS: In 1972, the plan for NASA was: After the moon, on to Mars. Nixon killed it. He had a war to pay for.

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SF AGE: How much closer are we today than Von Braun was back then?

LANDIS: We know a lot more about Mars. We know what resources are there we can use. We know what resources aren't there, what we can't do.

ZUBRIN: It wasn't money though, it was really gross stupidity and a lack of any sort of vision, coupled with the desire to cut short the political accomplishment of Nixon's predecessors. And because we know a lot more about Mars, we can now design mission plans that make effective use of the resources we *know* exist on Mars, namely its atmosphere. This makes it possible to design a much cheaper and more efficient mission than the Von Braun megaspacecraft plans of 1953 and 1969.

BEASON: What we really need to do is to get the public back behind this—get them excited again. Unless we can show the average "Joe" that his money is going for something other than Teflon or Tang then we won't have a motivating factor. And it has to be *big*, like responding to a threat—perhaps fixing the environment.

SF AGE: If I gave you air time on the nightly news, what would each of you say to motivate America?

ZUBRIN: I would say that we are now in a position to send humans to Mars within 10 years, and that we can do it with a fraction of NASA's total budget. That we, and not some future generation, can snatch the honor of being the first pioneers of humanity's next world.

BEASON: I'd start with a way to take advantage of the end of the Cold War. Now that it's over, it's time to turn our economy away from being fueled by the military-industrial complex (of which Bob Zubrin and I are a part), to being fueled by a space-based economy. And that means throughout—from establishing "Land Grant" colleges that emphasize space, to producing the professionals needed for an international effort.

LANDIS: I would say that the urge to explore space is the most noble and selfless dream of humankind. If we do not go forward, to Mars and beyond, we will inevitably slide backward and be forgotten by history. H.G. Wells said it all: in the end, it will either be the stars, or nothing at all.

SF AGE: What is the current state of the trip to Mars? Where do we stand?

ZUBRIN: There is another thing that I would try to get across, and that is that the present opportunity for human expansion to Mars is historically *unique*. For the past 50 years, the U.S. and other nations of the world have spent literally *trillions* of dollars to develop a technological capability—

for military purposes—that is unparalleled in history. Now that the Cold War is over, that technological capability is available to enable the break-out of humanity into the solar system. It won't be available forever. If the peace holds, and we don't go to Mars, then that capability will decay away. If the international situation sours, it will have to be recommitted to national defense. If we don't seize the time, *now*, to expand into space, another opportunity might not reoccur for a century or a millenia. As President Clinton said in his inaugural speech, "This is our time, let us embrace it."

BEASON: What that means is a program on the order of the old InterState Highway system—producing jobs, fueling the economy. Then we'd have a space-centered GNP that

would outlast political ups and downs (and games).

ZUBRIN: All the fundamental technology needed to mount a Mars mission within a decade is in place.

SF AGE: And that technology is?

ZUBRIN: Chemical rockets, aeroentry, 1970s era life support systems, and 19th century chemical engineering techniques to make rocket fuel and oxygen on Mars. We need to do some hardware engineering, but Mars right now is in fact

much closer than the Moon was in 1961 when Kennedy announced the Apollo program.

LANDIS: In fact, I personally believe that the best way to go to Mars may well be with a technology that Bob Zubrin has been pushing: to use the resources of Mars itself to make the fuel to return home.

BEASON: Bob, are we really that close? How long will it take to gear up the assembly lines to produce the infrastructure necessary to get to Mars?

ZUBRIN: No serious program of human exploration on Earth ever has been done without using the resources available in the environment to be explored. Doug, it only took three and a half years to win World War II. It shouldn't take much longer than that to build a few rockets.

BEASON: But remember, we want more than a one shot deal. Anything that's not embedded in our infrastructure is "fair game" to be cut by the bean counters. We need something that they can't afford to cut—not money, but benefits. If we're getting gobs of science, employing hundreds of thousands of people, you know the politicians aren't going to cut that!

SF AGE: Must it all begin with allocating the dollars? Does this all have to start with Clinton, Gore, and the next budget?

LANDIS: NASA's budget is less than one percent of the federal budget. Space is cheaper than a fleet of B-2's. And a lot more useful! And doesn't kill people!

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SF AGE: But what *specifically* must we do to get moving?

ZUBRIN: We need a streamlined program that eliminates useless intermediate steps. Infrastructure is to be minimized. Creating liabilities by inflating the cost of a program won't encourage anyone to provide the funds to sustain it. But by making full use of Martian resources right from the first mission, we can have a Mars base cheap, and one that is sustainable.

LANDIS: And generates technology and jobs!

BEASON: But "Space" is not going to defend us—you're talking about apples and oranges. By the way, that's *not* saying we need to build more B-2s!

ZUBRIN: I've had a lot of experience talking to the general public, not just space cadets, about manned missions to Mars, and I can tell you that they support the idea enthusiastically. The problem is that there is a disconnect between the public and Washington.

SF AGE: Will it take a Mars lobby?

ZUBRIN: We need to mobilize the support that is already there. That is why I suggested to the National Space Society that they begin a nationwide petition drive in support of SEI. They've done that, now it is up to all of us to do the work to insure that the campaign succeeds.

BEASON: Just because something is cheap doesn't mean that the Congress or the public will back it. Look at the SSO (Single-Stage-To-Orbit) project—it costs less than one space shuttle flight, but yet no one in government is willing to back it. And if it succeeds, it will completely revolutionize access to space.

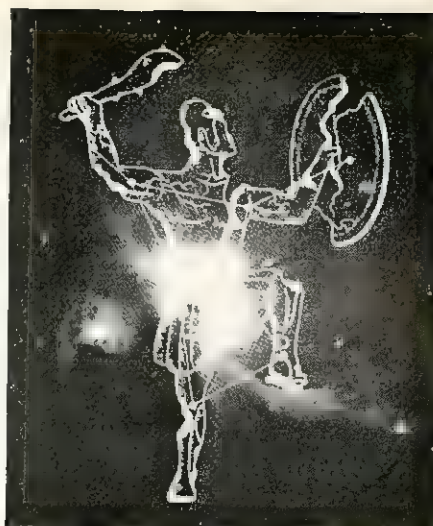
SF AGE: If we started tomorrow, what is a reasonable time table?

ZUBRIN: A number of years to develop the required heavy lift booster and other primary payload elements, launch an unmanned Earth return vehicle to Mars in 1999, humans to Mars in 2001. You could extend the schedule, but not too much as any overly extended program is guaranteed to fail.

LANDIS: We have been, so far, talking about going to the *surface* of Mars. There is also a strong case for going to, not just the surface, but the *moons* instead. There are three good reasons for this plan. First, the lesson of Apollo was: when you reach your goal, your budget will be cut. So we perhaps shouldn't rush to Mars too fast. We should take our time and develop technology and experience while we're doing it.

ZUBRIN: If we take our time, we'll never get there. An airplane can't take off at five miles per hour, and neither can a Mars program.

LANDIS: Secondly, Mars may have had life. Any manned landing will spread organics around the surface. It may be difficult, later, to figure out which are ours and which may be fossil remnants of what



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had been there long ago. If we explored by robotic probes operated from orbit, we could learn a lot without contaminating the planet.

BEASON: It's probably already too late—we're not certain the Russians completely sterilized their crafts.

LANDIS: Third, and perhaps most interesting, is that Deimos and Phobos are some of the most interesting objects, other than the surface of Mars, that we can get to. Should they only be a footnote in the rush to Mars? Or explored in their own right? Further, there is a very good case that Deimos has buried water 50 meters below the surface. Water, as we all know, is rocket-fuel ore. Last, it's a lot easier to do than to go to the surface.

BEASON: And we don't have the money to go robotics. Do you know it costs on the order of 1 billion dollars for a Mars exploration probe? That \$1 Billion is for a robotic probe only. We can't have many of those and keep everyone's interest. We've got to make it so people get something more out of it than rocks, or "lines on an oscilloscope." That's why *humans* must go.

ZUBRIN: The fact of the matter is that Phobos and Deimos are no more interesting than any of 3,000 other asteroids. Mars is much more interesting. It's the labs that will tell us whether or not life is pervasive in the universe. And it's much easier to make rocket fuel out of the Martian atmosphere than buried ice on Phobos.

LANDIS: Deimos and Phobos have very little gravity, and are far, far easier to get to than Mars—easier to get to than the moon, as a matter of fact. Also easier to get to than 99.9% of the asteroids. Going there is not like landing on a surface (difficult) but like rendezvousing with a spaceship (easy).

BEASON: It's cheaper to go to an asteroid near Earth. Makes more sense, too.

LANDIS: Yes, we should do that, too. It's a good thing to do in and of itself, and in the process of going to Deimos and Phobos, we will check out the transfer ship part of the surface mission.

SF AGE: Care to make any guesses on what we will find when we get there? You know, the kind of prediction that will make you look silly when we eventually *do* get there...?

BEASON: Elvis. I hear there's a big statue of him, blasting out "All Shook Up."

ZUBRIN: I think we will find evidence of past life, but only after an intensive search. People don't find dinosaur fossils on Earth during weekend expeditions. Finding fossil microorganisms on Mars will be tougher.

*If we do not go
forward, to
Mars and
beyond, we will
inevitably slide
backward....*

LANDIS: That seems a good bet. We now believe that Mars was once warm and wet. If life evolved here, it might have done so there.

ZUBRIN: But I think we'll find them, because conditions on Mars and Earth were similar for a longer period of time than it took life to appear on Earth, and nature follows lawful processes.

BEASON: That goes back to saving the environment—use that as a reason to go.

ZUBRIN: I think that it will be no more complex than bacteria, although that includes blue-green algae and stromatolite colonies of bacteria-like organisms. Nucleated cells are unlikely. Microscopic complex organisms even less so.

LANDIS: I think we may have to go there to learn what we can find.

BEASON: Right now, with Vice President Gore having the environment as number one on his agenda, using Mars to learn about Earth makes sense politically. So the time seems ripe for going to Mars to learn the answers to important environmental questions, if nothing else.

ZUBRIN: We can't use the environment as a reason to go, because it's not the reason to go. We should go to Mars to explore, to find out about the place of life in the universe, and to begin the process of spreading life throughout the universe—our kind of life, that is.

LANDIS: Everything you learn about one environment will tell you about another. You are aware that the "nuclear winter" scenario was developed after scientists studied the effect of dust in the atmosphere of Mars? When you have only one environment, it's hard to learn "what if" questions.

ZUBRIN: The problem is, people don't see NASA's program as leading there. Americans are willing to spend lots of money to get what they want. But they are not willing to wait.

BEASON: I believe that, but we've got 20 percent of our nation either at or under the poverty line. What about the critics who say take care of this first? Educate the children? Rebuild our infrastructure? Give us Health Care?

LANDIS: All! Money spent on space is spent right here on Earth. There's no better investment in technology or infrastructure or even jobs.

ZUBRIN: And certainly none better in promoting education.

BEASON: Geoff, that doesn't compute. If so, we'd all be rich because of the huge investment in the military-industrial complex. Besides, over 50 percent of NASA's budget goes to overhead. We're doing something wrong.

LANDIS: Yes, in my opinion.

ZUBRIN: Nevertheless, the reason why people live better today than 500 years ago is not because of social programs, it's because of technological progress. And a great deal of that has been funded by governments, mostly for military purposes.

LANDIS: Science stagnates between wars, sad to say. But perhaps space could be the alternative to break the cycle.

BEASON: The space program was started as a response to the "Soviet threat."



Explorers investigate part of the canyon system of Mars. Art by Pat Rawlings.

Without the development of ballistic missile technology, there would have never been a space race, and perhaps no space program.

SF AGE: Would anyone care to comment on Mars fiction? What works, and what doesn't? What's scientific, and what's now only fantasy? Can any of you still read the good old "bad" Mars fiction?

ZUBRIN: Yes, I can. Burroughs or Bradbury are still fun.

BEASON: Bad fiction is bad no matter where it takes place.

ZUBRIN: I think that science fiction still has a major role to play in helping get us to Mars. As Shelly said, poets are the legislators of mankind. We need to create a hegemonic vision among the public, including those who eventually turn up in the seats of power, that a human civilization on Mars is an idea whose time has come.

LANDIS: If not us, who? If not now, when?

SF AGE: Any summation or last words?

ZUBRIN: People need to know that history is not a spectator sport. The science fiction and pro-technology communities have more than enough clout to make a Mars mission happen, if we just decide to do so. People need to stop moaning about the stagnation of our space program and start doing something about it.

BEASON: I agree. Mars is the next step to ensure the survival of humankind, expand off this fragile planet and on to the stars. □

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The mortal Princess loved the Prince of the Underworld,
to whom no mortal man could compare. But what good is love,
if it comes at the cost of one's soul?

The Princess Who Danced Until Daybreak

BY LOIS TILTON

Illustration by Paul Salmon

Then the King had the passage to the Underworld sealed, and he gave his youngest daughter as a bride to the soldier, and half his kingdom besides.

The new King and Queen stepped onto the floor to lead out the first dance. The young Queen was dressed in a gown of the finest silk, with new dancing shoes laced onto her feet. There were diamonds on her breast and a rope of pearls coiled into her fair hair, and her hand held by the King was covered with rings.

Step, step, glide. Her back was straight, her head held high, toes in her new satin shoes properly pointed as the royal dancing masters had always instructed the Princesses. *Step, step, pause. Turn. Face your partner. Bow.* The Queen's face was expressionless. Her eyes held no warmth for her partner. Her bow was performed to mechanical perfection, straight-backed and graceful, rising again in a single smooth motion. The King was resplendent in his Hussar's dress uniform, but his bow was awkward, his head rose with a jerk. Again, he took his bride's hand as the measure continued. *Step, step, turn.*

Four hundred wax candles illuminated the grand ballroom. The courtiers glittered in their gowns and jewels, their brocade coats and uniforms and Orders. The Queen smiled at none of them. This was not her father's court; none of her sisters were here. The old nobility had retreated to its own castles, unwilling to bend the knee to an upstart common soldier on a throne. Their replacements were the vulgar merchants, the petty country nobility, former mercenary captains, all the opportunists who had flocked to this court to surround the new King with their flattery and demands.

It was common knowledge by now that the kingdom was in disorder. There was unrest in the towns and among the guilds. The Treasury was in complete disarray for want of competent and honest officials, and there were rumors that even the army's pay might be in arrears.

Almost every subject in her father's kingdom had objected to the partition. Foremost among them had been her sisters, each one certain that she ought to be a queen. Once the scandal had been revealed, there was no chance for a brilliant foreign marriage for any of them, lovely as they were. Still, one of the old

King's daughters must inherit his throne when he died, and several of their husbands had legitimate claims in their own right.

The new King's palm, holding his bride's hand, was hard and calloused. He moved stiffly in his new coat with its bright gold thread and lace. She could not deny that he tried to be a good ruler, that he took running a kingdom seriously. But he was

simply not suited for a throne, either by birth or education or experience. He was still what he had always been, a common mercenary soldier, a fact no royal marriage could possibly alter.

As the musicians played the final chord, the partners all bowed to one another once again. Rising with her usual grace, the Queen spoke to excuse herself from further dancing.

Her husband frowned. "Why so weary, Madam? I can remember the time, not so long ago, when you could dance all the night through to daybreak, until your shoes were worn to nothing."

It was not often that he let the bitterness show in his voice. The Queen raised her eyebrows but made no reply, only retired in silence to her chair, where a page brought her a glass of wine.

Sipping it, she waved her ladies away and closed her eyes. To dance until daybreak! Oh! how she remembered it, laughing and dancing in the arms of her Prince until the soles of her slippers were worn all to shreds.

Hearing the music now, she could imagine herself in the white marble palace once again, dancing, spinning on the floor inlaid with pearls, with the gleam of the diamonds shining overhead, dancing in the arms of her Prince, her pale, silver-haired Prince of the Underworld!

He had never laid rough hands on her tender breasts, had never invaded her body with his own. No, her Prince had been a tender lover, his touch light and burning on her throat, on her lips. Gentle, yet strong, graceful and tireless, he had whirled her through the measures of the dance, across the floor, glide and leap and spin.

Such music there had been in the Underworld! Such dances that no mortal music master had ever taught. In the arms of her Prince, she truly believed she could have danced there ceaselessly, forever. There was no weariness in that realm, no blisters or aches.



Her feet in their tattered shoes had been as light as a bird's wing. How she had dreaded the approach of dawn, when she had to leave that place where the trees were silver and gold, where the flowers were jewels which she could pluck and fasten in her gown, in her hair. When she had to leave her Prince on the shore of the crystal lake, where the sands were glittering diamonds.

It had been only on reaching the opposite shore that she finally did feel the weariness of the long nights, the pain of her blistered feet. Limping, weary, she and her sisters would return to their cold narrow beds, where they could scarcely be roused in the morning, so deep was their exhaustion.

But now, each night, her bed belonged to the one who had betrayed them all. Instead of her Prince's burning touch, she must endure this common soldier's rough and calloused hands, his coarse lusts.

The Queen stared through the crystal of her empty wineglass, shattering the lights of a hundred candles into thousands. But they were only common wax candles, not diamonds, not stars. Their light was dim in her eyes, the gold on her walls was tawdry gilt paint, the courtiers vulgar and clumsy. The music grated on her ears. And the King, her husband—

Turning her head abruptly away, she signaled to her page to fill the goblet with more wine.

No one at her court ever danced until daybreak. The ball ended early, and then the Queen repaired with her ladies to her bedchamber. Her gown was unlaced, the pearls were removed from her hair. Then in her nightrobe she waited alone for the King.

He came as he always did, his calloused hands unfastened the laces of her robe, pushed the fabric apart, opened her. She closed her eyes. She knew he meant to get a son on her body, an heir to his kingdom, but this, at least she could deny him.

There was an old woman who lived on the outside of the town, and from her the Queen had obtained a small bottle. Three drops each evening in her wine. She would never bear a child to a common soldier; never, no matter if he wore a crown.

He finished, finally, and leaned back onto his heels above her, breathing hard from the vigor of his effort. She had made no sound, no cry throughout, though she had to bite her lip once to hold it back. He looked down at her body, lifted a hand slightly as if to touch her, then let it drop.

He made a sound then, a short, harsh cry which made her open her eyes in surprise. "Do you feel nothing, then? Ever?"

She saw him above her, the coarse maleness of him, the hair that covered his chest and ran in a thin line down his belly, the scars, the slight thickening around his waist. He had closed his own eyes. "I married a hollow woman! She left her soul behind in the Underworld!"

Unbidden, her hand went to her chest, where her heart ought to be. Could she feel it beating? But then she recognized the scent of wine on his breath. "You could have had another," she said finally. "There were 12 of us to choose from."

"And would one of your sisters have loved me better than you?"

She said nothing.

"Do you know the first thing I saw, when I came to your father's palace? The scaffold in the courtyard. And 12 daughters with faces like marble, hearts like ice. But one—the youngest one—brought me the drugged wine, and for just one moment there was pity on your face. Do you remember what you said? 'Such a shame this one has to die too.' Do you remember?"

She finally said, "You have your throne."

"Yes, my throne." The bitter laugh again. "I suppose I must content myself with that. While I still have it."

He rose from the bed then and stumbled from the room, leaving his Queen alone. Her body ached from the use he had given her. She shut her eyes again. Her Prince was white and smooth and unscarred, his touch light and gentle. His hands would burn

as they touched her, *here and here*. He would pull her from this bed, lift her in his strong arms, spinning her around and around while the music played on. . . .

A tear stung beneath her eyelids. It was true. She had left her soul behind with her Prince, far away in the Underworld, and the entrance was sealed, sealed shut so she could never pass through it again. Never dance with him again.

Alone on her bed, the Queen wept. Late the next morning, a page stepped into the Queen's chamber to announce the King. She looked up from her embroidery frame, where she was stitching slender trees in gold and silver thread.

He stood straight and vigorous in his uniform, showing no sign of his weakness the night before. "You will doubtless be pleased to hear, Madam, that you'll be spared my company for a while. I'm leaving today to inspect the regiments in the north."

She stood, allowing him to take her hand. "Fare you well," she wished him. She had never wished him harm.

He bowed over her hand, not quite touching it with his lips, then spun abruptly and left the room, the sound of his boots ringing on the polished floor. But two of the Queen's ladies wept and had to be dismissed from the chamber, for they had husbands or lovers stationed in the north, and now the rumors of unrest on the borders seemed to be substantiated.

With the King and his officers gone, the court seemed suddenly empty. The Queen dined privately with her ladies, those who didn't lie weeping in their bedchambers, and afterwards retired early. Tonight she would lie untouched and alone.

Moonlight spilled over her bed. The servants had neglected to close the heavy draperies at the windows. The Queen shut her eyes. In the realm of her Prince there was no moon, only the bright glittering diamond stars. Dancing beneath those stars. . . .

But the castle's surrounding silence was too deep, and the music of her reverie was silent. The Queen moved restlessly beneath the perfumed satin sheets on her bed. Finally she got to her feet and went to the window, looking out onto the moonwashed empty pleasure gardens.

A hollow woman.

She whispered aloud in the silence, "My soul is trapped in the Underworld."

But if she were hollow and empty now, who had made her thus? Who had invaded the Underworld to betray her, to demand an unwilling bride and kingdom? She and her sisters had never discovered the key which the soldier had used to follow them through the secret gateway to the hidden realm. She alone of the 12 Princesses had heard his footsteps behind them on the stairs, had felt the pull on the hem of her gown as he stepped on it, following them.

Somewhere he must have the key hidden. If only she could find it, a way to return to that place where she had lost her soul. Oh, to be one with herself again, to be able to feel joy!

She threw a silk shawl around her shoulders and went to the door that led to the King's own bedchamber. How empty it was, how austere the furnishings. A plain hard bed stood in the center. The wardrobes held court dress, riding coats and uniforms, polished boots—nothing to tell the man who lived here from any other man. No secrets here.

Kneeling, finally, she pulled out a small battered chest from beneath the bed. One by one she took out the objects—a pistol, with its powder horn, patch box and other accessories, a few tarnished medals, a yellowed paper that proved to be a certificate of discharge. A well-worn woolen cloak. And wrapped inside it—her heart leaped—wrapped inside it the broken branch of a tree with silver leaves, and another one of gold!

Trembling, she lifted them out, one by one. These were the branches he had broken from the trees of the Underworld, the evidence he had shown their father that sealed their fates. Frantically, she searched the chest for more, but there was no hidden

key, nothing but what she had already found—a few rusting mementos of a soldier's inglorious career.

Clutching the branches to her chest, the Queen went back to her own chamber, her own empty bed. In several weeks the King returned, but the court held no balls to celebrate the occasion. There had been betrayal and rebellion, put down *with bloodshed*. The husband of one of the Queen's sisters had lost his head, a younger son of one of the noblest families in their father's realm. Another lay confined in chains in a strait tower of the castle.

"You were wounded," said the Queen, rising to meet her lord.

He glanced at the bandage around one hand as if he hadn't noticed it before, then shrugged. "You need not worry, Madam. I'm not likely to die from it. Unlike others."

Many others had died. One of the Queen's ladies left the court in mourning, another wept with relief.

There were more soldiers in the castle than ever, and fewer courtiers. The candles were plain tallow now, not wax, and often in the state rooms they were not lit at all, as the King was always closeted elsewhere with his advisers. One after the other, more of the Queen's ladies left for their homes.

One day the King came to her unannounced and ordered all her attendants from the room. "I've been advised to abdicate," he said slowly when they were alone. "I suppose the marriage would be annulled. It's fortunate there were no children, isn't it?"

He looked hard at her then, but she said nothing, and after a moment he went on, "Or perhaps they'll make you a widow. Either way, it comes to the same thing. Of course, you'll return to your father's court. Whether you marry again... will not be my concern."

She stared at him, then down at her hands. One of the rings there was her wedding ring, a heavy gold band. She turned it on her finger and said, almost in a whisper, "It is not to my father's court that I would return."

He laughed then, the short, harsh sound she had heard before. "Tell me, Madam, those princes and grand dukes, the ones who came before me—did you and your sisters watch when your father's executioner took off their heads? What do you think—was the reward worth it?"

Faintly, "We never asked them to risk their lives. We never wished it."

"No," he said rising to his feet. "I suppose you never did."

The decision to abdicate had come too late. Armies had already gathered, were marching on the castle. The King rode out to meet them.

The next time his bride saw him, he was in chains.

The faces of the victors were grim and merciless. She recognized them, all in their blood-splashed armor—there stood eight of her sisters' husbands, a former Grand Marshal of the kingdom, the high lords and peers she had never seen gathered at her court. The former hostages were there, released now from their own chains, and the fathers and brothers of the ones who had been killed in the fighting.

But they paid her every courtesy, not as a former Queen but as a Princess again, her father's daughter. She was told that she would be given a proper escort back to his castle, where arrangements would be made for her future.

The old Marshal took her aside. "Of course, you're under no obligation to see him at all—your former husband. But it is my duty to inform you—he has asked."

She glanced at the faces of some of the others and saw that they begrudged even that much to their defeated enemy. "I will see him, once," she said, lowering her eyes.

They had not treated him well, not as befitted a King—even a conquered one. She could see how the weight of the chains had already rubbed his wrists raw.

"Well, Madam, it seems you're finally free of me." There was no more bitterness in his voice, only resignation.

She shook her head but made no move to go to him, to touch him. "I never wished... this."

"You'll go back to your father now, to his court."

"They say that I must."

He hesitated, staring at her with a sudden intensity that made her turn uncomfortably to go.

"Wait!"

She paused at the door to his cell.

"The cloak. Take the cloak."

The cloak! In sudden understanding, her eyes opened wide. As soon as they brought her back to her own chamber, she ran to the adjoining apartment that had been the King's and fell to her knees beside the empty bed, pulling out the chest, praying that it was still there, the cloak that had once wrapped the gold and silver branches stolen from the Underworld.

And it was, the threadbare woolen cloth folded again and laid on the bottom. So he had known. All this time, he had known.

With unsteady hands, she shook it out, then placed it around her own shoulders.

Immediately, the world around her turned gray and indistinct, as if she were viewing it through a fog. Everything seemed more distant than it had been, and distorted. She understood as soon as she tried to walk across the room how the soldier had once misstepped on the hem of her gown.

There was a sudden pounding on her door, and a man's voice calling for her, "Highness!"

Her heart raced in a panic that they would find her here, and she stared around searching for a place to hide, but before she could, the door was opened and one of the Marshal's knights came into the room. Looking directly at the place where she stood, he called out again, "Highness, are you here?"

Holding her breath, the Princess stood motionless, clutching the cloak tight to her body. How could he not see her? But the knight took a cursory glance around the chamber, then left the way he had come.

The Princess released her breath. It must be true! Wearing the cloak, she was invisible!

She hardly dared believe it as she took first one cautious step out into the corridor, then another. But a servant, colorless and dim in her new vision, hurried past her without a glance, and the Princess grew more confident. She was free, she realized. She need not return to the confinement of her father's castle, where she and her sisters had spent so many nights locked away together in a single room. And somehow, she knew, cloaked in this invisibility, somehow she would be able to find her way back to the Underworld.

It was her lord's final gift to her, and the Princess paused in a moment of regret, for she knew what they would do to him, and she didn't wish him harm. She never had wished any of them harm, it was only that they had come to betray her and her sisters and tear them from the arms of their Underworld lovers.

She hurried on, her heart beating fast in hope, for her Prince had once whispered the secret that there was more than one entrance to his realm. How she could find it now, she did not know, only that she must, for she had left her soul behind in the Underworld, in his keeping. To find it again, to return to him, was her only goal.

All day, unseen, she crept through the misty halls of the castle, while the victors searched for her with a rising concern. Wrapped in the cloak, she avoided them easily. As night came on, their forms seemed thin and almost without substance in the starlight, as if they were wraiths or shadows.

Suddenly her eye was caught by a bright silver glow. Hurrying toward it, she found herself at the edge of an ancient well. Here

Continued on page 65



Tchaikovsky's symphonies were composed to be performed "slowly and lugubriously," or *andante lugubre*, according to classical music terminology. If only the tragic composer could have lived his life the same way. . . .

ANDANTE LUGUBRE

BY BARRY N. MALZBERG

Illustration by Steve Voita

TCHAIKOVSKY LIVED ON, STUNK in the wheelchair, broke into the pustules and exploded surfaces of extreme old age, exuded the leprous but alluring perfume of death. How could he have expected this in his tragic and masked 40s when suicide had been his companion, self-immolation the glowing ring of fire at the far end of his spasms and jerky thrusts? But now he lived on and on, surviving the rivalries at the Conservatory, his self-loathing, the scandalous and poorly concealed sex life, the conflicts with his brother Modest, more treacherous than he but long, long dead.

Tchaikovsky aged: he went on and on, lived tremulously past the threats to the czar, the division of the Balkans, the second and successful revolution. He fled Moscow at 77 for a brief stay in Berlin, then inched his way via Paris to the Hollywood Hills where he enjoyed a sinister celebrity as the composer of popular ballet scores and survivor of the Bolsheviks. In his early 90s, discarding flesh like a fungus, no longer composing, not a composer for four decades since the quite shocking unsuccessful attempt at the conservatory to poison him, Tchaikovsky became the recipient of renewed public attention, found indeed a minor revival. His music began to be used as background score for the new talking pictures. He was also a focus for the increasing colony of Russian emigres and sullen victims of Stalin, who continued to pour into both coasts speaking rumors of insanity as the Soviet Union became less tolerable, Stalin ever more crazy. Wizen, reeking, unable to summon his diminished wits, Tchaikovsky was nonetheless drafted as one of the early opponents of Hitler, was made nominal head of various committees of the entertainment industry which expressed alarm at Hitler's increasingly brutal reign. Tchaikovsky had never had much use for Jews or gypsies himself but seemed to agree, nodding and reeking, that Hitler was certainly a menace.

Ninety-eight years old, blanket across his decomposing knees, trembling hands tucked into one another in some palsied approximation of infantile masturbation, the hands sneaking little touches of his vanished genitals tucked all against one another underneath the worn and faded blanket bearing scenes from the Bolshevik assault upon the Romanoff treasures, Tchaikovsky on one of his bad days was still sumptuously wheeled by Samuel Goldwyn (born *Goldfish*) into Ciro's in Los Angeles where a meeting on behalf of the American-Russo-Jewish alliance had been called to discuss means of opposing Hitler and bringing public attention to *Kristellnacht* and the oncoming mass murders. Sergei Rachmaninoff, now in his late 60s and failing visibly from a multitude of physical insults and exile, sat at the table beside Walt Disney, Darryl Zanuck and other titans and solons of this vanished time. Gershwin was supposed to have been there and in fact was to have chaired the meeting but the treatments for the brain tumor only partially removed in 1937 had reduced him to a shuddering and crazy recluse in his institutionalized holdings and there

were rumors that he recognized no one, not even Ira. Upton Sinclair had sent a telegram of regret and regard, as had Norman Thomas. But Arnold Schoenberg and Eric Korngold were there and as a measure of the President's own interest, Harry Hopkins had sent an aide as an unofficial observer. The aide, a shy man named

Jacob Javits, would later achieve some minor political office, although he never achieved—due perhaps to his close affiliation with what came to be called the 'Kike Committee'—the Senate or governorship to which he felt entitled.

TCHAIKOVSKY SAT THROUGH THE OFTEN CONTENTIOUS MEETING in a stuporous and commingled condition. At the age of 99—a remarkable chronology but hardly a time of life which held much sparkle as the grim and devious Rachmaninoff advised the table—he had succumbed progressively to not only the stink but the more terrible organic deterioration of extreme old age and sat shrivelled within his chair, little wisps and patches of his youthful music circulating unsuccessfully within his brain as he tried to pay some minimal attention to the proceedings. Schoenberg was convinced that without petitions, demands, huge rallies and radical demonstrations, the Jews of Germany and perhaps all of Europe were doomed. Rachmaninoff, who had never particularly cared for Jews as a race but was willing to concede their humanity and their very real difficulties at the present time, agreed with this position but suggested that outrage would only generate unpleasant public attention. Korngold, who was trying to manage a very difficult course in motion pictures at this time—his scores were quite successful but he had a reputation as a fire-brand and troublemaker, doubtless because of the ardor of his youth—at 42 wanted no more trouble. Unable to convince Goldwyn or Zanuck of this repentance, however, Korngold had little to say, although he whispered agreement with Schoenberg. Goldwyn, ever master of malaprop, suggested that Hitler be sent a series of conditions by the solons of Hollywood with the penalties for his ignorance to reach severity if he did not agree to cease in his persecution.

Zanuck had little to add to this, being concerned largely with the etiquette of the affair and his desire not to give offense or to be too conspicuously Jewish while at the same time offering solidarity. So it was left to Hopkins' assistant, the 35-year-old Javits, a real go-getter it had been rumored, to make some statement, but Jacob fumbled uncomfortably with his hat, said that he was there to be an observer and that the administration while certainly concerned with the plight of the Jewish community could not in these dark and invasive times take a position. Rumors of Poland's imminent fall, Javits added, rendered the Administration's position even more difficult. How could Roosevelt come out strongly for the Jews if war was beckoning? It would be said that the country had entered the war, had declared war on behalf

of the Jews and that could lead only to an unpopular verdict and a loss of public support. It was best if the Jewish interests, even those as influential and highly placed as the Hollywood masters, waited and allowed events to overtake Hitler.

"After all," Javits said, "once Hitler goes to war, once he finds himself actively entangled with this country and its allies, he will be far too busy and threatened to murder more Jews. He will have to turn his attention to larger matters." As this seemed horrifyingly on the verge of real tastelessness, Javits smiled painfully and said, "You do understand, do you not, that I am myself Jewish. There is no intent, none whatsoever, to minimize the seriousness of the situation, but strategic considerations do apply."

COILED WITHIN THE THEMES OF HIS FIRST SYMPHONY, THE Winter-Dreams now thundering through the bare and shattered panels of his sensibility, Tchaikovsky heard only the word *Jews* and it seemed to bring him to a kind of attention; for the first time on this tortured afternoon, for the first time in many weeks in fact he appeared to focus on the situation. "Jews," Tchaikovsky bellowed. "Let me tell you about Jews. The Czar had a special feeling and their problems in my opinion have long been overrated. Now you have to consider the political situation, to say nothing of their influence upon the Conservatory. My first plan was to continue with opera but Rimsky had some unpleasant things to say about *Onegin* and then again it was never the same after Mme. von Meck died and I lost a charming and willful supporter. And that is all I have to say about that." The composer concluded, "You really do have to watch those Jews, that is very important, because it is clear that the Jews are always watching you."

This effort seemed to exhaust him, the pustules on his fervid skin seemed to open, the bellowing of the old composer having taken him to a thin and perilous intensity which made a knifing stink. Tchaikovsky fell back against his chair. Rachmaninoff, neither Jew lover nor great supporter of Tchaikovsky, muttered in disgust and cast bitter glances at Schoenberg and Korngold who looked at him with an equal loathing. "If there is nothing more to say," Rachmaninoff pointed out, "perhaps we should adjourn this meeting. I have bags to pack, business to attend, I am entraining to conduct the Philadelphia Orchestra next Saturday, also I can contribute nothing more here."

"Essentially," the composer said, "and with apologies to my distinguished colleagues, I think that the Jews must protect themselves. We had to fend for ourselves during our Bolshevik storming, Petyr and I, there was little help coming across the waters or the boundaries for such as we when the Bolsheviks started shooting at us, and similarly, if the Jews are to escape this sodden *fatedness*, they will have to manage on their own. We can offer funds, perhaps, but little public support."

Rachmaninoff's statement incited little opposition although there was sullen grumbling to be heard up and down the corridors of Ciro's back room, then Schoenberg sighed and stood and said, "There has never been any help for the Jews throughout the history of the diaspora and surely that will not change now. So I move that we give this up and adjourn." There was a general murmur indicating agreement. "I concur," Korngold said, standing in turn, "If we cannot be given help freely then there is no help whatsoever, isn't that clear?" This seemed to have brought the meeting toward a necessary conclusion.

Jacob Javits was the first to leave, closing the notebook into which he had scribbled reflections and odd scraps of dialogue. He wished everyone well. "I wish you all well," said the ambitious 35-year-old, his persona already fixed toward a political career. One by one, making sure that they would not be seen in collusion or friendship, the executives left, Disney last of all, casting veiled glances at Tchaikovsky but offering nothing. There was scuttlebutt that Disney's intelligence was far overrated, that the cartoon man was in over his head, that he was the creation of

his assistants and support system but there was no one within or without the Colony who would challenge any of this. Finally only Tchaikovsky, leaking pus and memories, snoozing in his elaborate wheelchair, Rachmaninoff, Korngold and Schoenberg were left, Tchaikovsky's attendant Goldwyn having departed with the executives after pushing the chair with a flourish toward the composers. "So there you have it, gentlemen," Schoenberg said. "As you can see, there is nothing for us, but then again there never was, and we should not have expected otherwise."

Korngold said nothing. Striving for accommodation ever since his exile from Germany, he had through luck and connection found profitable work scoring films but despised himself all the more, and feeling the disapproval of Schoenberg he could hardly reach out in a gesture of agreement. Rachmaninoff said, "You will have to deal with this yourselves, of course. *My* fate is somewhat different, and I will not pretend that I share destiny with you Jews." Rachmaninoff gestured, the sweep of his hand seeming to include Tchaikovsky as well.

"Well, sure," Tchaikovsky said from the depths of his blanket and sudden, hazy recollection of the apotheosis second act of *The Nutcracker*, emerging from this cloister of dimly regretted music to momentarily engage circumstance in the way that the wry old, the pained, the terminally ill, the humorless old and the senile so often manage. "Of course that is true but up to a point. Jews live on and on just as myself," Tchaikovsky said. "Lenin and Marx themselves knew that there was no end to the problem simply because of their eager and avaricious nature. Does that make any sense? What makes sense? We must consider, we must consider." The odoriferous composer hummed the descending notes of the first big theme of the first movement of his *Pathétique* in a voice so cracked that no one, not even the skilled composers and musicians, could understand what the man was singing. "They just go on and on, those Jews," Tchaikovsky said. "They live on and on and always will."

He began to conduct that first movement from the chair, the violins pounding in his head, the bassi weeping, the waving of his arms seeming epileptic to the unschooled, medically naive observers who stared at him with confusion but without any hope at all.

"So much for petitions, memories, justice or prayer," Tchaikovsky concluded and wrapped his blanket more tightly, muffling in some way the stink of his gangrenous farts. Korngold came forward, gave the chair a sudden push although whether to provide locomotion or show resentment was never made clear. The aged and quivering Tchaikovsky, only 88 pounds including his wounds and excrescence, now fully wracked by the implausibility of his unforeseen condition, fell straight from the chair and onto the floor at Ciro's, exploding the cartilage of his nose and inducing massive bleeding. That bleeding took the composer so close to death that only the heroic efforts of the hastily-summoned ambulance attendants were able to save his life, hold him together to await the final medical disaster which would surely come at some point past the invasion of Poland.

But this did not happen.

Tchaikovsky lived on and on, he superseded his odor and the poisonous corruption of his flesh, he became at last something slender and aseptic, odorless in the chair. He attended Schoenberg's funeral in 1951 hidden under even more blankets and insignia, he lived on to be greeted by Clifford Odets in Hollywood when Tchaikovsky was wheeled into the Un-American Activities Committee hearings. He lived on and on close to the present era, in fact, perhaps beyond. He is a survivor of purges and Bolsheviks, depression and despair, Mme. Von Meck and all of the indignities of a buried sexual existence. He is in fact alive today although in ever-worsening health, unable now to even express flatulence. Regrettably, none of the others have survived, nor did the European Jews they sought to protect. What does this mean? It means almost nothing: it is an anomaly which defies the ability of even an ironist to assess. □

ESSAY

Continued from page 22

busy for an hour. Finally we get through; but all the ticket clerks have gone. The night watchman tells us to call back in the morning.

"No problem," the helpful hotel clerk says—a phrase to be dreaded throughout the third world. "You just go to the airport first thing in the morning, they get you on plane." Well, okay. But there's a hotel room reserved for me in Palermo. I wasn't on the flight to Rome this afternoon and so I'm not going to be in Palermo tomorrow. Will the hotel clerk phone my hotel in Palermo and tell them I'll be a day late? No problem. Except the phone line to Palermo isn't working. He sends a telex instead—but no confirming reply comes back. The telex, I will learn later, never arrived.

I give up and go to bed. Rise at dawn, drive my dilapidated rental car (no side mirror, no spare tire, no seat-belts) to the Tunis airport, present myself at the ticket counter. Next flight to Rome, I learn, is four days from now, except for one due to leave in an hour, which is full except for first class seats. Good, I say, sell me a first class seat. Oh, monsieur, you must get on line.

But there is no line. There's only a madhouse of hyperkinetic Tunisians milling around waiting for planes to 20 different places. Desperately I cut through them and find someone who seems to be in charge. Sell me a ticket to Rome? Of course, he says, just go downstairs. I've been downstairs. They sent me upstairs. Ah, he says. You must try it again.

I do. And am sent upstairs again. Time ticking away. I find a new counter. Yes, they can sell me a ticket. Cash only. We are outside the credit-card zone. I pay in a mixture of Tunisian dinars and dollars. He takes forever to count the money out and calculates the dollar exchange with pencil and paper. Then he writes the ticket. Computer print-out? Forget it. The plane for Rome is due to leave in five minutes. At last I'm sent to the gate. By way of passport control, naturally, and you can imagine what that is like. Somehow I get through, drenched with sweat (it's 80 degrees at 8 in the morning, no air-conditioning in the airport) and run wildly for the plane, two minutes past takeoff time.

No problem. Why did I ever think the plane would take off on time?

Tunisia—and a lot of similar countries around the world—has made it into the era of television, computers, airplanes, telephones, and such. But those countries haven't made it very far. They do have the rudiments of high-tech society but not enough infrastructure to connect things properly, and so they exist in an uncomfortable limbo, using technology that is partly of the 1990s and partly of the 1950s and valiantly improvising to keep everything together.

A trip to Africa, to much of Asia, and to great segments of Latin America, thus becomes a kind of trip in time. We of the West move routinely nowadays through a shimmering, glittering high-tech existence. You and I live today in the future that I read about when I was a kid, and to me, at least, it seems tremendously futuristic indeed, whenever I take the time to look at it through the eyes of my own very much younger self. And then we go abroad and we step out of our dazzling Heinleinesque epoch into a world that in all too many ways resembles the one that people of my age grew up in.

Not completely, of course. The world I came into, a little less than 60 years ago, was one of rotary-dial telephones, propeller-driven airplanes, and fragile 78-rpm records that played about five minutes per side. Such things as credit cards and nuclear power plants and transistor radios were as yet unimagined, television was still strictly a laboratory item, space satellites and computers—"giant thinking machines," they were called—were wishful fantasies. I used to feel a tingle of amazement when I considered that my father, born in 1901, had grown up in an era when the telephone, the automobile, and the airplane were still enormous novelties; but in fact the technological changes in my own lifetime have been far greater.

You don't have to get very far from home, though, to realize that planet Earth is not advancing at an equal pace into the science fictional future. Here in the United States, and in most of Western Europe as well, a thousand little details a day confirm the fact that *our* 1993 is every bit as astounding, take it for granted as we may, as the 1993 that science fiction writers created 40 and 50 years ago. In most ways, I think, today's real world actually outgleams the visions of 1993 that such SF masters as Robert A. Heinlein, Fritz Leiber, and Henry Kuttner were dreaming up for kids like me in *Astounding Science Fiction* and *Thrilling Wonder Stories* 40 and 50 years ago.

But—just as the 19th century world had the telegraph and the railroad on one hand and surviving tribes of head-hunters and cannibals on the other—immense technological gulfs exist today, setting apart the futuristic civilization that we of the Western industrialized nations have built from that of the simpler, slower, less advanced nations of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. To them, we Americans live a truly science fictional existence, surrounded as we are by the million miracles of late 20th century technology.

The difference—and it is an agonizing one—is that the citizens of Earth/1993 are just far enough into the wonderful science-fiction future that even the most backward peoples of the world know exactly what it is they're missing. A century or so ago, the primitive tribesfolk of Borneo or the Congo not only had no idea what life in Queen Victoria's London or Napoleon III's Paris was like then, but could hardly have imagined it, nor would they have dared to hope to turn their own villages into plausible imitations of London or Paris.

The problem today is that the third world countries realize just how far behind they are. Information travels the world at the speed of light today, and there are no dark

corners left. The eye of television reaches everywhere. So does the telephone, when it's working; so does the fax; so does the computer. Even in the most primitive regions, enough of our astounding world is made manifest to peoples whom we once would have called, in our quaint way, "natives." They see, lurking just around the edges of their difficult lives, our sleek computers, our profusion of medical wonders, our fancy telephones that actually function properly. And the natives are restless.

Sometimes backwardness actually becomes an advantage, as in Eastern Europe, where the former Communist overlords regarded a workable telephone system as a danger to the body politic. Instead of bothering to install the wires and conduits of a traditional telephone network now, those newly liberated countries are leap-frogging right on into the age of the cellular telephone, since building a wireless phone system from scratch is far easier than trying to upgrade the existing antiquated conventional lines.

But that's an exception. Mostly, the gulfs seem to be widening, even as we see vestiges of our high-tech society coming into being in improbable places. Pundits used to talk about a revolution of rising expectations; but now the expectations have risen to the flood stage. In the confusing new century that is now about to open, in which the have-not nations will no longer be able to play the United States off against the Soviet Union to their own technological advantage, how will they be able to push themselves onward toward technological competence? And if they fail to attain it—those densely populated, deeply troubled countries of the third world—what explosive forces, not yet fully comprehended, will sweep over our comfortable science fictional lives as we press onward into the ever more intricate future? □

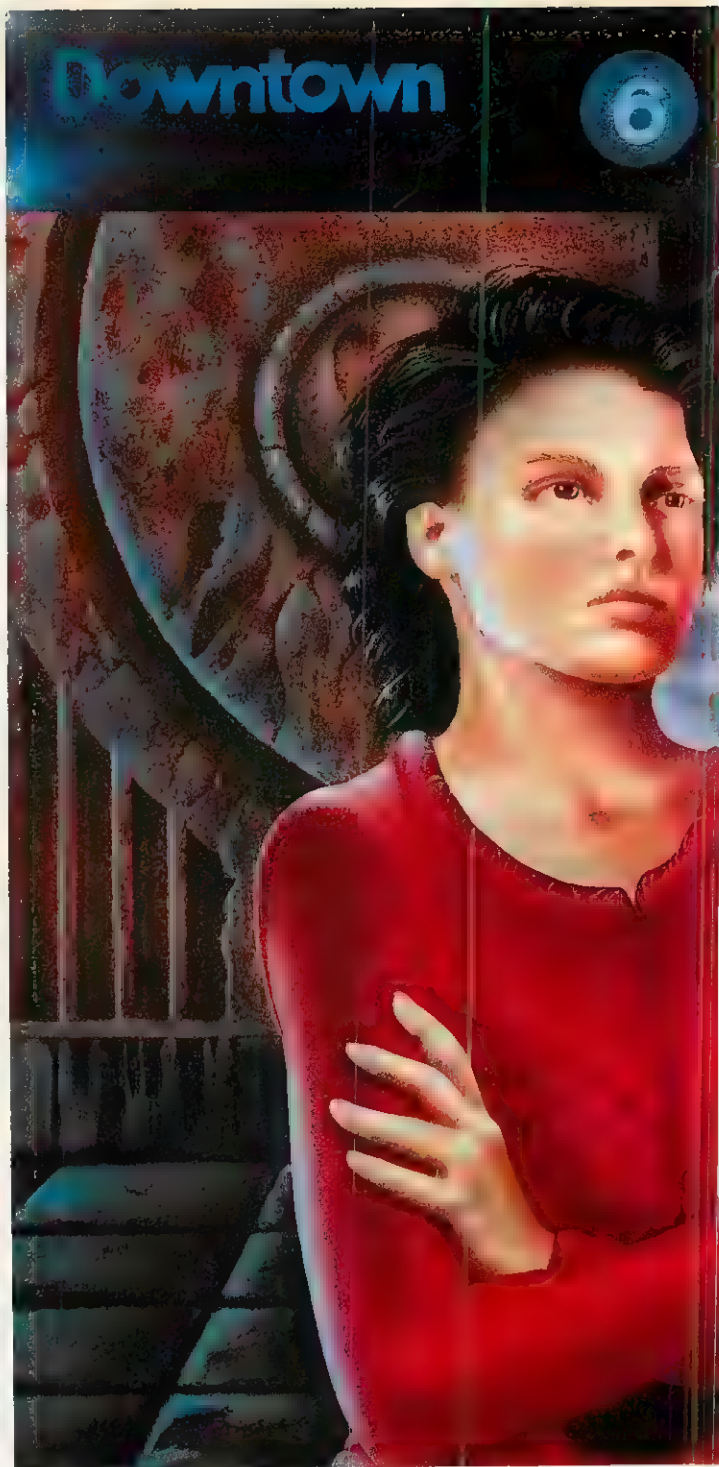
*Wherever I
look today, I
see things that
give me the
sensation of
having stepped
into a science
fiction story.*

Trapped with terrorists in a future divided between Haves and Have-Nots, Vic feared that what he would soon have not—was his life!

THEY KINGDOM COME PART TWO

BY BEN BOVA

Illustration by Debbie Hughes



What Has Gone Before: Vic Passalacqua lived in the mean streets of an urban landscape gone mad, where his every day was a struggle for survival. His only bright spot was Jade Diamond, a childhood friend who had been forced to turn hooker in her own battle for survival. He loved her, but she dared not love him back, for the rules of their street would not allow it. Their only hope was the bankroll Vic had been collecting for years, which might soon allow them an escape to a better life.

Enter Big Lou, a tough gangster in a future that seems to have toughened everyone. He agrees to help Vic if Vic will do him one small favor—use his electronics knowledge to build a timer for a bomb intended to blow up the underground railroad tracks set to bring the Chairman of the World Council to their city for a ceremonial visit. Vic agrees to help, in part out of hope that Big Lou will help him, and in part because he knows he'll end up with broken kneecaps if he refuses.

Plans go awry when Vic, Jade and Big Lou's malicious son Little Lou find themselves trapped in an underground tunnel beneath the city with Moustache, the leader of a group of terrorists for whom the bomb had been built. Knowing that Little Lou intends to kill Vic in order to steal Jade for himself as soon as the mission is over, Vic readies himself to use the razor strapped to his ankle. If he must die, Little Lou will die as well. . . .

*Audio transcript of testimony
of Salvatore (Vic) Passalacqua:*

I WAS STARTIN' TO PULL UP MY PANTS LEG TO REACH THE BLADE I kept taped to my ankle when I felt Moustache's hand on my shoulder. "No," he whispered.

I must have looked pretty sore to him. He said, low and soft, "I am a man of honor. I will see to it that you and the girl go free after our operation is concluded. Trust me."

Lou had already passed me by then. Rollo got up on his feet, towerin' over us all like a mountain. I let my pants leg slide down

to my ankle again. I just hoped Lou and Rollo didn't notice what I had started to do.

A little while later three more guys came down the same ladder we had used, two of them carryin' big leather suitcases, the third carryin' a little metal case and climbin' down so careful that I figured he had the bomb in it. They were foreigners too, but they looked different from Moustache and his men. They had dark skins, all right, but a different kind of dark. And they were taller, slimmer, with big hooked noses like eagles' beaks. Like Moustache and his men, they were wearin' regular suits. But they looked like they were uncomfortable in them, like these weren't the kind of clothes they usually wore.

Anyway, after talkin' a few minutes with Moustache they went up the tracks with the little metal case. They came back again without it, but trailin' a spool of wire. Which they connected to my radar gizmo. I noticed that the detonator was gone; they had



taken it with the bomb, I figured. Then they set the gizmo right in the middle of the tracks and waited.

"Won't the oinks see it there?" I asked Moustache. "The police," I added before he could ask what oinks meant.

In that sad way of his he said, "Your Mr. Lou has been well paid to see to it that the security guards do not come down the tunnel this far." He kind of sighed. "It always surprises me to see how well bribery works on little men."

Bought off the security guards? I wondered if even Big Lou could cover all the Federal oinks that must be coverin' the Chairman. I mean, this guy was the Chairman of the World Council. They must be protectin' him like they protect the President or some of those video stars.

Moustache must've understood the puzzled look on my face. "There is a full security guard on the train itself and entire platoons of soldiers at the station. The responsibility for checking

the security of the tunnel was given to your city police force. That is why we decided to do our work here. This is the weak link in their preparations."

He talked like a general. Or at least, the way I thought a general would talk. No, I never did get his name. Nobody spoke to him by his name; nobody I could understand, at least. I did find out later on that he had another half-dozen men farther down the tunnel, also waitin' for the train. Twelve guys altogether. Fourteen, if you count Little Lou and Rollo.

OK, so the time finally comes. Little Lou is almost hoppin' outta his skin he's so wired up. Jade was sittin' as far back in the alcove as she could, legs tucked up under her, still starin' off into space and seeing nuthin. I started to wonder what Lou had done to her, then tried to stop thinkin' about it. Didn't work.

Moustache is as calm as a guy can be, talkin' in his own language to his two men. The other three strangers are bendin' over

their suitcases, and I see they're takin' out all kinds of stuff. I'm not sure what most of it was, but they had little round gray things about the size of baseballs, weird-lookin' kinds of guns—I guess they were guns, they looked kind of like pistols—and finally they pulled out some rubbery gas masks and handed two of 'em to Moustache's men.

Lou and Rollo are lookin' down the track towards the station, and I see they have pistols in their hands. Rollo's hands are so big his pistol looks like a toy. Little Lou is sweatin', I can see the beads comin' down his face, he's so [deleted] scared. I keep myself from laughin' out loud. He's worried that the oinks he bought off won't stay bought. Be just like them to take his money and then double-cross him by doin' their job right anyway.

But then I figured that maybe Big Lou was the one who paid off the oinks. Screwin' Little Lou is one thing; if they mess around with Big Lou they'd regret it for as long as they lived. And so would their families.

Moustache sends off all five of the strangers up the track. I wonder how close to the bomb they can get without bein' blown up themselves. I wonder if the bomb will bring down the roof of the whole [deleted] tunnel and bury all of us right where we are. I wonder about Moustache sayin' they ain't tryin' to whack the Chairman. What're they gonna do, then?

I didn't have to wait long to find out.

MOUSTACHE IS STARIN' HARD AT HIS WRISTWATCH, THAT BIG pistol in his other hand. I hear a dull *whump* kind of noise. He looks up, runs out to the middle of the tracks. I go to Jade, who's gotten to her feet. Lou and Rollo are still starin' down the track toward the station, Moustache is lookin' the other way, toward where the train is comin' from. Nobody's watchin' us.

"Come on," I whisper to Jade. "Now's our chance."

But she won't move from where she's standing.

"Come on!" I say.

"I can't," she tells me.

"It's now or never!"

"Vic, I can't," she says. I see tears in her eyes. "I promised him."

"[Deleted] Lou!" I say. "I love you and you're comin' with me."

But she pulls back. "I love you too, Vic. But if I go with you Lou will hunt us down and kill you."

"He's gonna kill me anyway!" I'm tryin' to keep whispering. It's makin' my throat raw.

"No, he told me he'd let you alone if I stayed with him. He swore it."

"And you believe that mother-[deleted] lying [deleted]?"

Just then we hear gunfire and guys yelling. Sounds like a little war goin' on up the track: automatic rifles goin' *pop-pop-pop*. Somebody screamin' like his guts've been shot out.

Moustache yells to Lou and Rollo, "Quickly! Follow me!" Then he waves at me and Jade with that big pistol. "You too! Come!"

So with Moustache in front of us and Lou and Rollo behind, we go runnin' up the track. There's a train stopped up there, a train like I never seen before. Like it's from Mars or someplace: all shinin' and smooth with curves more like an airplane than any train I ever saw. Not that I ever saw any, except in pictures or videos, y'know.

I see a hole in the ground that's still smokin'. The track is tore up. That was where the bomb was. It was just a little bomb, after all. Just enough to tear up the track and make the train stop.

We run past that and past the shining engine. Even in the shadows of the tunnel it seemed to shine, like it was brand new. Not a scratch or a mark on it. No graffiti, even. Where I come from, we don't see much that's new. It was beautiful, all right.

Anyway, there are three cars behind the engine. They all look spiffy too, but a couple windows on the first car were busted out, shattered. The car in the middle had a blue flag painted on its side, a flag I never seen before.

Moustache climbs up onto the first car and we're right behind

him. We push through the doors. There's a bunch of dead bodies inside. Flopped on the floor, twisted across the seats. Not regular seats, like rows. These seats were more like big easy chairs that could swivel around, one next to each window. You could see there'd been plenty of bullets flyin' around; the bodies was tore up pretty bad, lots of blood. I heard Jade suck in her breath like she was gonna scream, but then she got control of herself. I almost wanted to scream myself, some of those bodies looked pretty damned bad.

One of the tall guys came through the door up at the other end of the car. He had his gas mask pushed up on top of his head. His rifle was slung over his shoulder, makin' his jacket bunch up so I could see a pistol stuck in the belt of his pants. He looked kind of sick, or maybe that was how he looked when he was mad.

Moustache went up and talked with him for a minute, lookin' kind of pale himself. Lou told Rollo to pick up all the loose hardware layin' around the car. What? Hardware. Guns. Must of been six or eight of 'em on the floor or still in the grip of the dead guys. Oh yeah, two of the dead ones were women, by the way. Far as I remember, neither one of 'em had a gun in her hand.

We got through the connecting doors and into the middle car. Not everybody in there is dead. Only a couple guys in blue suits that Moustache's men are already draggin' down into the third car, at the end of the train.

There was one guy alive in there, a little guy no bigger than me, with eyes like Jade's. Otherwise he looked like a regular American. I mean his skin wasn't dark even though it wasn't exactly light like mine. And the suit he was wearin' was a regular suit, light gray. Right away I figured he was the Chairman of the World Council. C.C. Lee.

HE WAS SITTIN' THERE, HIS FACE FROZEN WITH NO EXPRESSION on it, almost like Jade's when Little Lou had been pawin' her. I looked at him real close and saw his eyes weren't exactly like Jade's; they were real oriental eyes, I guess. Hard to tell how old he was; his hair was all dark, not a speck of gray in it, but he didn't look young, y'know what I mean? Straight hair, combed straight back from his forehead. Kinda high forehead, come to think of it. Maybe he was startin' to go bald.

Anyway, Moustache sat down in the chair next to his and swivelled it around so they were facin' each other. Jade and I stood in the aisle between the rows of chairs. The others moved out to the other two cars.

"This is not what I wanted," Moustache said. He talked in English, with that accent of his.

"It is what you should have expected," said the Chairman. His English was perfect, just like a newscaster on TV.

"I regret the killing."

"Of course you do."

"But it was necessary."

The Chairman looked at Moustache, *really* looked at him, right into his eyes like he was tryin' to bore through his skull.

"Necessary? To kill 16 men and women? How many of your own have been killed?"

"Four," said Moustache. "Including my brother."

The Chairman blinked; "I am sorry for that," he said, almost in a whisper.

"He knew the risks. Our cause is desperate."

"Your cause is doomed. What can you possibly hope to achieve by this action?"

"Freedom for the political prisoners in my country. An end to the dictatorship."

"By kidnapping me?"

"We will hold you hostage until the political prisoners are freed," said Moustache. "The people will see that we have the power to bend the dictator to our will. They will rebel. There will be revolution—"

The Chairman shook his head like a tired, tired man. "Blood

and more blood. And in the end, who is the winner? Even if you become the new head of your nation, do you really think that you will be better than the dictator who now resides in the Presidential Palace?"

"Yes! Of course! How can you ask such a question of me? I have dedicated my life to overthrowing the tyrant!"

"Yes, I know. I understand. Just as Fidel did. Just as Yeltsin did. Yet, if the people are not prepared to govern themselves they end up with another tyrant, no matter how pure his motives were at the start."

Moustache gave him a look that would have peeled paint off a wall. "You dare say that to me?"

The Chairman made a little shrug. "It is the truth. You should not be angered by the truth."

Moustache jumped to his feet, yelling, "The truth is that you are our hostage and you will remain our hostage until our demands have been met!" Then he stomped up the aisle toward the front car.

I told Jade to stay there and hustled after Moustache. I caught up with him in-between the two cars, out on the platform connecting them.

"Hey, wait a minute, willya?"

He whirled around, his eyes still burnin' with fury.

"Uh, excuse me," I said, tryin' to calm him down a little, "but you said it'd be OK for us to leave once the job was over, remember?"

The anger went out of his face. He made a strange expression, like he didn't know whether to laugh or cry. "The job is far from over, I fear."

"But I did what you wanted—"

He put a hand on my shoulder. "We had intended to take the Chairman off the train and drive him to a helicopter pad we had prepared for this operation. Unfortunately, the truck we had stationed at the emergency exit from the tunnel has already been seized by your soldiers. We are trapped here in this tunnel, in this train. The Chairman is our prisoner, but we are prisoners, too."

"[Deleted] H. [deleted] on a crutch!" I yelled.

"Yes," he said. "Indeed."

"Whattaya gonna do?"

"Negotiate."

"What?"

"As long as we hold the Chairman we are safe. They dare not attack us for fear of harming him."

"But we can't get out?"

"Not unless they allow us to get out."

I got this empty feeling in my gut, like I was fallin' off a roof or something. I guess I was really scared.

Moustache went through the door to the car up front. I went back into the middle car. Jade was sittin' where Moustache had been. She was talkin' with the Chairman.

"I had wanted to bring a message of hope to the people of America, particularly to the disenfranchised and the poverty classes of the dying cities," he was tellin' her. "That is why I agreed to make this speech in Philadelphia on the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence."

"Hope?" I snapped, ploppin' myself down in the chair across the aisle from the two of them. "What hope?"

He didn't answer me for a second or two. He just looked at me, like he was studyin' me. His eyes were a kind of soft brown, gentle.

"Do you know how many people there are like you in the world?" he asked. Before I could think of anything to say he went on, "Of the more than 10 billion human beings on Earth, three-quarters of them live in poverty."

"So what's that to me?" I said, tryin' to make it sound tough.

"You are one of them. So is this pretty young woman here."

"So?"

He kind of slumped back in his seat. "The World Council was

formed to help solve the problems of poverty. It is my task as Chairman to lead the way."

I laughed out loud at him. "You ain't leadin' any way. You're stuck here, just like we are."

"For the moment."

Jade said, "We could all be killed, couldn't we?"

I knew she was right, but I said, "Not as long as we got this guy. They won't try nuthin as long as the Chairman's our hostage."

The Chairman's eyebrows went up a fraction. "You are part of this plot? From what your friend here has told me, you were forced to help these terrorists."

"Yeah. Well, that don't matter much now, does it?" I said, still tryin' to sound tough. "We're all stuck in this together."

"Exactly correct!" says the Chairman, like I had given the right answer on a quiz show. "We are all in this together. Not merely this—" and he swung his arms around to take in the train car—"but we are all in the global situation together."

"What do you mean?" Jade asked. She was lookin' at him in a way I'd never seen her look before. I guess it was respect. Like

*I wonder if the bomb will bring down
the roof of the whole [deleted] tunnel?*

Big Lou wants people to behave toward him. Only Jade was doin' it on her own, without being forced or threatened.

"We are all part of the global situation," the Chairman repeated. He was lookin' at her but I got the feeling he was talkin' to me. "What happens to you has an effect all around the world."

"Bull[deleted]," I said.

He actually smiled at me. "I know it is hard for you to accept. But it is true. We are all linked together on the great wheel of life. What happens to you, what happens to a rice farmer in Bangladesh, what happens to a stockbroker in Geneva—each affects the other, each affects every person on Earth."

"Bull[deleted]," I said again.

"You do not believe it?"

"Hell no."

"Yet what you have done over the past 24 hours has brought you together with the Chairman of the World Council, hasn't it?"

"Yeah. And maybe we'll all get killed together."

That didn't stop him for even a half a second. "Or maybe we will all change the world together."

"Change it?" Jade asked. "How?"

"For the better, one hopes."

"Yeah, sure. We're gonna change the world," I said. "Jade and me, we don't even [deleted] exist, far as that world out there's concerned! They don't want no part of us!"

"But you do exist, in reality," he said, completely unflustered by my yellin' at him. "And once we are out of this mess, the world will have to admit your existence. They will have to notice you."

"The only notice they'll ever take of the likes of Jade and me is to dump our bodies in a [deleted] open pit and bulldoze us over."

"Hey, stop the yellin'!" Little Lou hollered from the front end of the car. He had just come in, with Rollo right behind him like a Saint Bernard dog. Lou looked uptight. His jacket was gone, his shirt wrinkled and dark with sweat under the armpits. His hair was mussed, too. He was not happy with the way things were goin'. Rollo looked like he always looked: big, dumb and mean.

Moustache pushed past the two of them. Jade got up from her chair and came to sit next to me. Moustache took the chair, putting his face a couple inches away from the Chairman's.

"The situation is delicate," he said.

The Chairman didn't make any answer at all.

"We are unfortunately cut off here in the tunnel. The security

forces reacted much more quickly than we had anticipated. They are now threatening to storm the train and kill us all. Only by assuring them that you are alive and unharmed have I persuaded them not to do so."

The Chairman still didn't budge.

Moustache took in a deep breath, like a sigh. "Now the chief of your own security forces wants to make certain that you are alive and well. He demands that you speak to him." Moustache pulled a palm-sized radio from his jacket pocket.

The Chairman made no move to take it from his hand.

"Please," said Moustache, holding the radio out to him.

"No," the Chairman said.

"But you must."

"No."

We all kind of froze. Everybody except Little Lou. He stepped between Moustache and the Chairman and whacked the Chairman in the mouth so hard it knocked him out of his chair. Then he kicked him in the ribs hard enough to lift him right off the floor. He was aimin' another kick when I went nuts.

I don't know why, maybe it was like watchin' a guy beat up on a kitten or some other helpless thing. I knew the Chairman was just gonna lay there on the floor while Lou kicked all his ribs in and none of these other clowns would do a thing to help him and I just kind of went nuts. I didn't think about it; if I had I would've just stayed tight in my chair and minded my own [deleted] business.

But I didn't. I couldn't. Before I even knew I was doin' it I jumped on Lou's back, wrapped my legs around him and started poundin' on his head with both my fists. If I'd wanted to really hurt him I woulda taken out my blade and slit his [deleted] throat. I didn't even think of that. All I wanted was for the big [deleted] to leave the Chairman alone.

So I'm bangin' on Lou's head, he's yellin' and swingin' around, tryin' to get me off him. And then something explodes in the back of my head and everything goes black.

WHEN I WAKE UP, I'M SEEN' DOUBLE. TWO CHAIRMEN, two Jades. But nobody else.

"That was a very brave thing you did," says the Chairmen.

I'm layin' flat on my back. Jade is bendin' over me, two of her kind of fadin' in and out, blurry-like. The Chairman is on the floor beside me, his arms wrapped around his chest. Otherwise the car is empty. Everybody else is gone.

"What happened?" I said.

"Rollo knocked you out," Jade answered.

I shoulda guessed that. Musta hit me like a truck. I tried to sit up but I was so woozy the whole [deleted] car started whirlin' around.

"Lay still," Jade said. Her voice was soft and sweet. I thought I saw tears in her eyes, but still seein' double it was hard to tell.

"You OK?" I asked the Chairman.

"Yes, thanks to you." His lip was split and his face was kinda pale, like it was hurtin' him to breathe.

"Where'd they go?"

"They are in the rear car," the Chairman said.

"More of them in the front. We are all trapped here. The Council's security forces have sealed off this tunnel. American Army troops have taken over the station and are patrolling the streets above us."

"But they won't make a move on us because Moustache says he'll whack you if they do."

The Chairman nodded. And winced. "We are their hostages. He is trying to convince them that he has not already killed me."

"Why didn't ya talk to your people on the radio?" I asked him. "Lou woulda beat you to death."

He almost smiled, split lip and all. "They can't afford to kill me. Your friend Lou is a barbarian. Even Moustache, as you call him, would have stopped him if you hadn't."

"So I got slugged for nuthin'."

"You were very brave," said the Chairman. "I appreciate what you did very much. To risk one's life for the sake of another—that is true heroism."

"You're a hero," Jade said. And she really did smile. Like the sun shinin' through clouds. Like the sky turnin' clean blue after a storm.

I reached for her hand and she took mine and squeezed it. Her hand felt warm and good. I mean, don't get me wrong, I busted my cherry when I was 12 years old. Had my first case of clap not much later. I ain't no Romeo like Little Lou, but I got my share. But Jade, she was special. I didn't wanna just screw her, I wanted to live with her, make a home with her, even have kids with her. Yeah, I know she was fixed so she couldn't have kids. They do that to the pros. But I thought maybe we could find a doctor someplace who could make her OK again.

But first I hadda get her outta her life before she came down with somethin' that'd kill her or got herself knocked off by some weirdo. OK, it was crazy. Stupid. I know. But that's how I felt about her. And I don't give a [deleted] what you say, I know she felt that way about me, too. I know. In spite of everything.

ANYWAY, THERE I WAS, LAYIN' ON THE FLOOR OF THE TRAIN holdin' onto Jade's hand like I was hangin' off the edge of a 99-story building. I asked the Chairman, "So what happens now?"

He started to shrug but the pain in his ribs stopped him. "I don't really know."

"I still don't see why you wouldn't talk to your people on the radio."

"We do not make deals with terrorists. I know that every government official of the past 75 years has said that and then gone on to negotiate when their own citizens have been taken hostage. You must remember that the World Council is very new. Our authority is more moral than military or even financial—"

"I don't unnerstand a word you're saying," I told him.

He looked kinda surprised. "Let me put it this way: We do not deal with terrorists. That is the official policy of the World Council. How would it look if I, the Chairman himself, broke our own rules and tried to negotiate my way out of this?"

"Beats gettin' killed," I said.

"Does it?"

"Hell yeah! You want Lou to go back to work on you?"

He closed his eyes for a second. "I am prepared to die. I don't want to, but if it comes to that—it comes to that."

"And what about us? What about Jade and me?"

"There's no reason for them to kill you."

"Who the [deleted] needs a reason? Lou wants to whack me, he's gonna whack me!"

"That... is unfortunate."

It sure the [deleted] was. For a couple minutes none of us said anything. Finally curiosity got to me.

"What's this all about, anyway? Why's Moustache want to take you hostage? What's in it for him? Who're those other guys with him? What the hell's goin' on around here?"

So he told me. I didn't understand most of it. Somethin' about some country I never heard of before, in South America I think he said. Moustache is the leader of some underground gang that's tryin' to knock off their government. The Chairman told me that their president is a real piece of [deleted]. No freedom for nobody. Everybody's gotta do what he says or he whacks 'em. Tortures people. Takes everybody's money for himself. Sounds like Big Lou's favorite wet dream.

So Moustache and his people want the World Council to get rid of this bastard. The World Council can't do that, accordin' to what the Chairman told me. "We are not permitted to interfere in the internal affairs of any nation." That's the way he put it. And besides, this dictator was legally elected. OK, maybe the people had to vote for him or get shot, but they did vote for him.

And guess who Moustache wants to make president when the

dictator gets pushed out? Good old Moustache himself. Who else?

So the Chairman tells Moustache he can't do nuthin for him. So Moustache decides to kidnap the Chairman and hold him until the World Council does what he wants. Or somethin' like that. Other guys from other countries who also want pretty much the same kind of thing from the World Council join Moustache's operation. Arabs or Kurds or somethin', I forget which. So they kidnap the Chairman. Big [deleted] deal.

So there we are, stuck in the train in the tunnel. They got him, but the U.S. Army and god knows what the [deleted] else has got us trapped in the tunnel. Standoff.

BY THE TIME HE HAD FINISHED TELLIN' ME THIS WHOLE STORY—and it was a lot longer than what I just told you—I was feelin' strong enough to sit up. At least the room wasn't spinnin' around no more and I wasn't seein' double.

"So what happens now?" I asked the Chairman.

"We wait and see."

I saw a junkyard dog once, a real four-legged dog, get his paw caught in a trap the junk dealer had set for guys like me who like to sneak in at night and steal stuff. Poor damned dog was stuck there all night long, yowlin' and cryin'. Dealer wouldn't come out. Not in the dark. He was scared that if his dog was in trouble it meant a gang of guys was out there waitin' to whack him.

I felt like that dog. Trapped. Bleedin' to death. Knowin' there was help not far away, but the help never came. Not in time. By morning the dog had died. The rats were already gnawin' on him when the sun came up.

"You're just gonna sit here?" I asked him.

"There's nothing else we can do."

I knew that. But I still didn't like it.

The Chairman put out his hand and rested it on my shoulder. "You may not realize it, my young friend, but merely by sitting here you are fighting a battle against the enemies of humankind."

I wanted to say bull[deleted] to him again, but I kept my mouth shut.

It was Jade who asked, "What do you mean?"

"This man you call Moustache. The men with him. Your friends Lou and Rollo—"

"They ain't no friends of mine," I growled.

"I know." He smiled at me, kind of a shy smile. "I was making a small joke."

"Nuthin funny about those guys."

"Yes, of course. Moustache and Lou and the rest of them, they are the old way of living. The way of violence. The way of brute force. The way of death. What the human race needs, what the people want, is a better way, a way of sharing, of cooperation, of the strength that comes from recognizing that we must all help one another—"

I was about to puke in his face when he smiled at me again and said, "—just the way you tried to help me when Lou was beating me."

That took the air outta me. I mumbled, "Lotta good it did either one of us."

"Have you ever thought about leading a better life than the one you now live?" he asked.

"Well, yeah," I said, glancin' at Jade. "Sure. Who doesn't?"

"There are Indians living in the mountains of Moustache's country who also have a dream of living better. And nomads starving in man-made deserts. And fishermen's families dying because the sea has become so polluted that the fish have all died off. They also dream of a better life."

"I don't care about no fishermen or Indians," I said. "They don't mean nuthin to me."

"But they do! Whether you know it or not, they are part of

you. We are all bound together on this world of ours."

"Bull[deleted]." It just popped out. I mean, I kinda liked the guy but he kept talkin' this crazy stuff.

"Listen to what he's trying to tell us," Jade said. That surprised me, her tellin' me what to do.

"The reason the World Council was created, the reason it exists and I serve as its Chairman, is to help everyone on Earth to live a better life. Everyone! All 10 billion of us."

"How're you going to do that?" Jade asked. She was lookin' at the Chairman now with her eyes wide. She wasn't holdin' my hand any more.

"There's no simple answer," he said. "It will take hard work, for decades, for generations. It will take the cooperation of all the nations of the world, the rich and the poor alike."

"You're dreamin'," I said. "The United States is one of the richest countries in the whole [deleted] world and we still got people livin' like rats, people like me and Jade and who knows how many others."

"Yes, I understand," he said. "We are trying to convince your

*There was one guy alive in there,
a little guy no bigger than me....*

government to change its attitude about you, to admit that the problem exists and then take the necessary steps to solve it."

"Yeah, they'll solve the problem. The [deleted] Controllers swoop in, scramble your brains and turn you into a zombie. You wind up as slave labor in some camp out in the woods."

"Is that what you believe?"

"That's what I know."

"What would you say if I told you that you are wrong?"

"I'd say you're fulla [deleted]."

"Vic!" Jade snapped at me.

But the Chairman just kinda smiled. "When all this is over, I hope you will give me the opportunity to show you how misinformed you are."

"If we're still alive when this is over," I said.

"Yes," he admitted. "There is that."

He was quiet for a minute or so. I didn't like the way Jade was starin' at him, like he was a saint or a video star or somethin'. But I didn't know what to say to get her to look back at me.

Finally the Chairman pipes up again. "You know, I was born of a poor family also."

"Yeah, sure," I muttered.

"My grandmother escaped from Vietnam in an open boat with nothing but the clothes on her back and her infant son—my father. They went from Hong Kong to Canada. My grandmother died of pneumonia her first winter in Vancouver. My father was barely two years old."

"You're breakin' my heart," I said. Jade hissed at me.

"My father was raised in an orphanage. When he was 14 he escaped and made his way into the United States, eventually to Houston, Texas." The Chairman was lookin' at me when he was sayin' this, but it was a funny look, like I wasn't really there and he was seein' things from his own life that'd happened years ago.

"My mother was Mexican. Two illegal immigrants for parents. We moved around a lot: Houston, Galveston, the cotton fields of Texas, the orchards of California. I was picking fruit almost as soon as I learned to walk."

"You never went hungry, didja?" I said.

"I have known hunger. And poverty. And disease. But I have known hope, also. All through my childhood my mother told me that there was a better way of life. Every night she would kneel beside me and say her prayers and tell me that I would live better

than she and my father. Even when my father was beaten to death by a gang of drunken rednecks, my mother kept telling me to keep my eyes on the stars, to work hard and learn and aim high. She worked very hard herself.

"After my father died we settled in California, in a little city called Modesto, where she worked 12, 14 hours a day cleaning peoples' homes by day and office buildings at night. By the time she died, when I was 16, she had saved enough money to get me started in college."

"At least you had a mother," I muttered. "I was so young when mine died I don't even remember what she looked like."

"That is very sad," he said. Real soft.

"Yeah."

"I remember the prayer my mother taught me to say: she called it the 'Our Father'."

"*Oracion al Señor*," whispered Jade.

"Yes. Do you know it? And the line that says, 'Thy kingdom come?' That is what we must aim for. That is what we must strive to accomplish: to bring about a new world, a fair and free and flourishing world for everyone. To make this Earth of ours as close to heaven as we can."

"Thy kingdom come," Jade repeated. There were tears in her eyes now, real big ones.

Me, I didn't say nuthin. I kept my mouth shut so hard my teeth hurt. I knew that prayer. The one thing I remember about my mother is her sayin' that prayer to me when I was so little I didn't know what it meant. That's all I can remember about her. And it made me want to cry, too. It got me sore, at the same time. This [deleted] big shot of a Chairman knew just where to put the pressure on me. I sure wasn't gonna start bawlin' in front of him and Jade. Not me.

And I had lied to them. I did remember my mother. Kinda hazy, but I remember what she looked like. She was beautiful. Beautiful and sweet and—I pulled myself up short. Another minute of that kinda thinkin' and I'd be cryin' like a baby.

THE CHAIRMAN KIND OF SHOOK HIMSELF, LIKE HE WAS COMIN' out of a blackout or somethin'. He looked at me again. "Education is the key, my young friend," he said to me. "If we are to build a new world, we must educate the people."

"You mean, like school?" I asked him.

"Schooling is only a part of it," he said. "If we survive this, will you allow me to get you started on a decent education?"

"School? Me? You gotta be kiddin'!"

Jade said, "But Vic, he's giving you a chance—"

She never got no farther. Moustache came in, with Lou and Rollo behind him.

Moustache looked funny. Like he was real tired, all wiped out. Or maybe that was how he looked when he was scared. He stood in front of the Chairman, who stayed in his seat lookin' up at him. I kept my eye on Lou; he was watchin' Jade like he was thinkin' what he'd do with her later on. Like he owned her.

"We are at an impasse," Moustache said. "Your security forces seem perfectly content to sit and wait for us to give up."

"They have standing orders for dealing with terrorists," said the Chairman. "This is not the first time someone has attempted to kidnap a Council member."

"They will not attack us?"

"There is no need to, as long as they are certain you will not harm your hostages."

Moustache said, "We have only one hostage, but a very important one."

"Then all the others who were with me are dead?"

"Unfortunately, yes."

The Chairman seemed to sag back in his seat. "That is truly unfortunate. It means that you will not be allowed to escape. If no one had been killed. . ." His voice trailed off.

"Are you telling me that the troops will risk your life in order

to punish us for killing a few of your bodyguards?"

"Yes." The Chairman nodded slowly. "That too is their standard operational procedure. No negotiations with terrorists. And no leniency for murderers."

"They were armed! They killed four of my men!"

"Only six of them were armed. There were 19 altogether; most of them harmless administrators and my personal aides. Five of them were women."

Moustache sank into the empty chair across the aisle from the Chairman. "It was those Moslem madmen. When the shooting started they killed everyone, indiscriminately."

"They were under your command, were they not?"

"Yes, but not under my control."

"That makes no difference."

"You leave us no course, then, but to use you as a shield to cover our escape."

"The security forces will not allow it. Their orders are quite specific. Their objective is to capture the terrorists, irrespective of what happens to the hostages."

"They will let you be killed?"

"I am already dead, as far as they are concerned."

"You will pardon me if I fail to believe that," Moustache said.

"It doesn't matter what you believe," said the Chairman. "That is our standard operational procedure. It is based on the valid assumption that there are no indispensable men. The Chairman of the World Council can be kidnapped or even assassinated. What difference? Another will take his place. Or hers. You can do what you want to me, it does not matter. Violence will not deter us. Threats will not move us. The work of the Council will go on regardless of the senseless acts of terrorists. All you can do is create martyrs—and damage your own cause by your violence."

MOUSTACHE LOOKED UP AT LOU, WHO'D BEEN STANDIN' there through all this talk with a kind of wise-guy grin on his face.

With a sigh, Moustache said, "We will have to try your way, then."

I got to my feet, facin' Lou. Without even thinkin' about what I was doin'. Like my body reacted without askin' my brain first.

"Don't try to be a hero again, Sal," Lou said to me. And Rollo took a step toward me. But Lou went on, "We ain't gonna use any rough stuff—not unless we got to. We're just gonna sneak him out through the tunnel."

"But the soldiers got the tunnel blocked off," I said. "All the entrances—"

"Not all of 'em," said Lou. "There's a side passage for the electric cables and water pipes and all. It's big enough for maintenance workers to crawl through. So it's big enough for us to get through, too."

Lou yanked a map of the tunnel system outta his back pants pocket. It was all creased up and faded, but Moustache pulled a little folding table outta the wall and Lou spread his map on it. Then he pointed to where we was and where the nearest door to the maintenance tunnel was. Moustache decided that only the six of us would go. The rest of his men would stay with the train and keep the soldiers thinkin' we was all still in there.

While Lou and Moustache were talkin' all this over, Jade leaned over to me and whispered, "Vic, you gotta do something."

"Do? What?"

"You can't let them sneak him outta here! You gotta figure out a way to save him."

"Me? What the [deleted] d'you think I am, Superman?"

She just looked at me with those eyes of hers. Beneath the fancy surgery that had made her Jade Diamond, her deep brown eyes were still Juanita's. I loved her and I'd do anything for her and she knew it.

"You've gotta do something," she whispered.

Yeah. What the whole [deleted] World Council and half the U.S. Army can't do she wants me to do.

So Moustache calls in a couple of his men and gives them their orders. You can see from the looks on their faces that they don't like it. But they don't argue. Not one word. They know they're gonna be left hangin' out to dry, and they take it without a whimper. They must've really believed in what they were doin'.

Me, I'm tryin' to look like I'll do whatever they tell me. Rollo is just waitin' for Lou to give him the word and he'll start poundin' me into hamburger. And I figure Lou will give him the word as soon's we got the Chairman outta this trap and someplace safe. Lou wants Jade, so he'll give me to Rollo to make sure I'm not in his way. Moustache wants the Chairman so he can get what he wants back in his own country.

And the Chairman? What's he want? That's what I was tryin' to figure out. Was he really willin' to get himself smacked around or whacked altogether, just for this dream of his? A better world. A better life for people. Did he mean he could make a better life for Jade and me?

Well, anyway, all these thoughts are spinnin' around in my head worse than when Rollo had slugged me. We get down off the train with Lou in the lead, Moustache with his big pistol in his hand, the Chairman, me and Jade all in a bunch, and Rollo bringin' up the rear. Lou's kinda feelin' his way through the tunnel, no light 'cause he don't want the soldiers to know we're outta the train.

So we're headin' for this steel door in the side of the tunnel when I accidentally-on-purpose trip and fall to my knees. Rollo grabs me by the scruff of the neck hard enough to make my eyes pop and just lifts me back on my feet, one hand. But not before I slip my blade outta the tape on my ankle. It's dark so Rollo don't notice; I keep the blade tucked up behind my wrist, see.

All of a sudden my heart's beatin' so hard I figure Rollo can hear it. Or maybe the Army, a couple hundred yards up the tunnel. Half my brain's tellin' me to drop the blade and not get myself in any more trouble than I'm in already. But the other half is tellin' me that I gotta do somethin'. I keep hearin' Jade's voice, keep seein' whatever it was that was in her eyes.

She wants a better life too. And there's no way we can get a better life long as guys like Lou and Rollo can push us around.

So I let myself edge up a little, past Jade and the Chairman, till I'm right behind Moustache. It's real dark but I can just make out that he's got the gun in his right hand.

"Hey! Here it is," Lou says, half whisperin'. "Rollo, come and help me open up this sucker."

Rollo pushes past me like a semi-trailer rig passin' a kid on a skateboard. My heart is whammin' so hard now it's hurtin' my ears. Moustache is just standin' there, watchin' Lou and Rollo tryin' to open up that steel door. They're gruntin' like a couple pro wrasslers. It's now or never.

I SLASH OUT WITH THE BLADE AND RIP MOUSTACHE'S ARM OPEN from elbow to wrist. He grunts and drops the gun and it goes off, *boom!*, so loud that it echoes all the way down the tunnel.

"Run!" I yell to Jade and the Chairman. "Get the [deleted] outta here!"

The Chairman just freezes there for a second but Jade shakes his arm and kind of wakes him up. Then the two of them take off down the tunnel, toward the soldiers. I can't see where the [deleted] gun landed but it don't matter anyway 'cause Lou and Rollo have spun away from the door and they're both comin' right at me. Moustache is holdin' his arm with his left hand and mumblin' something I can't understand.

"You dumb little [deleted]-sucking [deleted]," Lou says. "I'm going to cut off your balls and feed 'em to you one at a time."

I hear a click and see the glint of a blade in Lou's hand. I shoulda known he wouldn't be empty-handed. Rollo is comin' up right

beside Lou. He don't need a knife or anything else. I'm so scared I don't know how I didn't [deleted] myself.

But I'm standin' between them and Jade and the Chairman. "Never mind him," Moustache yells. "Get the Chairman! Quickly, before he makes it to the soldiers!"

Everything happened real fast. Lou tried to get past me and I swiped at him with my blade and then Rollo was all over me. I think I stuck him pretty good but he just about ripped my arm outta my shoulder and I musta blacked out pretty quick after that. Hurt like a bastard. Then I woke up here.

So I'm a big shot hero, huh? Saved the Chairman from the terrorists. He came here himself this morning to thank me. And now that the TV reporters and their cameras are all gone you guys are gonna send me away, right?

Naw, I didn't do anything except set up the gizmo for them. And they made me do that. OK, so grabbin' Jade outta the tank was a crime. I figured you mother-[deleted] wasn't gonna let me go free.

But what'd they do with Jade? I don't believe that [deleted]

I am prepared to die. I don't want to but if it comes to that—it comes to that.

[deleted] story the Chairman told me. Jade wouldn't do that. Go to a—what the [deleted] did he call it? Yeah, that's it. A rehabilitation center. She wouldn't leave here on her own. She wouldn't leave me. They musta forced her, right? The [deleted] Controllers must be scramblin' her brains right now, right? The [deleted] bastards.

Yeah, sure, they're makin' a new woman outta her. And they wouldn't do nuthin to her unless she agreed to it. Sure. Just like she agreed to have her eyes changed. Big Lou said to change 'em and she agreed or she got her [deleted] busted.

You bastards took Jade away and don't try to tell me different. She wouldn't leave me. I know she wouldn't. You took her away, you and that [deleted] gook of a Chairman.

Naw, I don't care what happens to me. What the [deleted] do I care? I got no life now. I can't go back to the neighborhood. Sure, you nailed Little Lou and Big Lou and everybody in-between. So what? You think that's the end of it? Whoever's taken Big Lou's place will kick my balls in soon's I show up back on the street again. They know I saved the Chairman. They know I went against Big Lou. They won't give me no chance to go against them. Not a chance.

Sure, yeah, you'll take care of me. You'll scramble my brains and turn me into some [deleted] zombie. I'll be choppin' trees out West, huh? Freezin' my butt in some labor camp. Big [deleted] deal.

I know I got no choice. All I want is to find Jade and take her away with me someplace where we can live decent. Naw, I don't give a [deleted] what happened to Moustache. Or the dictator back in his country. Makes no difference to me. All I want is Jade. Where is she? What've you [deleted] bastards done with her?

Note: Juanita Dominguez (Jade Diamond) graduated from the Aspen Rehabilitation Center and is now a freshman at the University of Colorado, where she is studying law under a grant from the World Council.

Salvatore (Vic) Passalacqua was remanded to the Drexel Hill Remedial School to begin a course of education that would eventually allow him to maximize his natural talent for electronics. He was a troublesome student, despite every effort at counseling and rehabilitation. After seven weeks at the school he escaped. Presumably he made his way back to the neighborhood in Philadelphia where he had come from. His record was erased from the computer files. He is presumed dead. □

To a writer scorned, each rejection seems like the End of the World. But this time, it really *is* the End of the World!

HUNTING WABBIT

BY ALLEN STEELE

Illustration by Doug Chezem

I stood in the alley beside Casey's Bar & Grill for a few minutes, giving myself one last chance to decide whether or not I really wanted to kill the wabbit. It wasn't a hard decision, so I pulled the Smith & Wesson .38 out of the pocket of my leather jacket and double-checked the cylinder. I had fired the

revolver three times on my way downtown—twice over the heads of a rioting crowd when I had abandoned my car in a gridlock on the Vandeventer Overpass on Route 40, and once while I was hiking the rest of the way through the city, in the general vicinity of someone who had charged out of another alley eight blocks from here with a tire-iron in his hand—so there were three rounds left in the chamber. It would only take one bullet to knock off the bastard, though, so I wasn't worried about running out of ammo.

I closed the cylinder, put the pistol back in my pocket, took a deep breath and walked out of the alley. There was a stiff, cool breeze coming off the Mississippi River, rushing through the narrow cobblestoned streets of the waterfront. Above the low brick buildings of LeClerc's Landing, I could just make out the top of the Arch; the spotlights had been turned off tonight, but I could still see its silver crescent reflected in the moonlight. Further away, on the other side of Memorial Drive, I could hear the sounds of the city in turmoil: scattered gunfire, police and ambulance sirens, car horns battling with one another.

The rest of downtown St. Louis was going to hell, but, remarkably enough, the waterfront was actually rather peaceful. One might have thought it wouldn't be this way, considering that LeClerc's Landing is mostly one fern bar and nightclub snuggled against another, packed together in refurbished antebellum warehouses. On this night, though, most of the bars were closed; recalling how many churches I had seen open for services on my way down here, I figured that most of the Landing's regulars were rediscovering religion tonight. As the old saying goes, there are no atheists in foxholes. Or at ground zero.

I stopped on the sidewalk, pausing once again to look up at the night sky, searching for my own killer, and everyone else's. Of course, I couldn't see anything except the half-moon; the glare

of the city lights blotted out the stars, rendering the night sky dark and inert. Nonetheless, it was quickly approaching, careening out of deep space at 50,000 miles per hour like God's own shithammer. . . .

Enough. It was payback time for that pesky wabbit. The amber glow of the neon Budweiser sign hanging from the window of Casey's Bar & Grill was as warm as the notion of vengeance. Through the window, I could see a half dozen people huddled over the bar at the opposite end of the room, vague shadows against the pale light of the TV set on the wall above the cash register. I couldn't tell for certain if one of them was my quarry, but nonetheless I knew he was in there.

I walked to the door, but just before I grasped the handle, I remembered the magazine curled up within the inside pocket of my jacket. Of course. Can't forget that. I pulled out the magazine, unfolded it, stared at the cover with its cheesy clip-art. *Scrivener—The St. Louis Literary Review*. The wabbit's wittle carrot. I turned the pages until I found the book review section, then I tucked the open magazine beneath my left armpit and opened the door.

No one noticed me as I walked in; their attention was fully drawn to the TV. It was switched to CNN, where yet another talking head—probably a government official, someone from the White House or the Pentagon or NASA—was being interviewed by the anchorman. The grand finale for the human race was upon us, and it was even going to be shown on TV. I vaguely wondered what David Letterman's gag writers were doing tonight. Compiling a Top Ten list of things to do before the end of the world.

Personally, I had already made my own Number One choice. Go downtown and kill the wabbit. And there he was. . . .

I saw a familiar figure squatting on the middle barstool. Big fat guy, wearing a threadbare tweed jacket and extra-large Wrangler jeans, his graying blond hair pulled back in a just-past-trendy ponytail. I couldn't see his face, but I knew what it looked like: unkempt beard, wire-rimmed glasses, cynical eyes. And, if the information I had been given was correct, probably plowed on



vodka tonics, just as he was every night in this dump. I only hoped he wouldn't be too zoned to understand what was about to happen to him.

I strode through the seedy barroom until I was right behind the fat man. Hell, I could have done it blindfolded, just homed in on the stale-vinegar smell; his B.O. was that strong. Everyone else standing around the bar, including the sawlow-looking bartender on the other side of the beat-up oak counter, looked up as I approached, but the fat man sitting in the middle didn't notice my arrival. Not until I pulled the magazine out from under my arm and dropped it directly in front of him.

"Wabbit," I said, "your time has come."

As I pulled the .38 out of my pocket and poked its barrel against the back of his thick neck, George T. Wabbit slowly turned his head to look at me.

HOW SHALL I BEGIN? LET'S FLIP A COIN. HEADS, I'LL FIRST tell you about the end of the world. Tails, I'll explain why I decided to go downtown to kill the wabbit. Trust me, I won't cheat. Here's the flip. . . .

Abe Lincoln wins. The end of the world comes first. Poetic justice, that; George Wabbit was always a tail-end sort of person.

There's a class of asteroids which occasionally cross Earth's orbit while circling the sun. They are called Apollo asteroids, and once every now and then, one of them comes very close to colliding with our planet. These near-collisions have happened several times in recent history, in fact. In 1989, for instance, a rock about a half-mile in diameter missed Earth by less than 500,000 miles; if it had arrived only six hours earlier, it would have nailed us. Another one, this one only 30 feet in diameter, came within 106,000 miles of Earth in 1991. And then there was the slightly larger asteroid which grazed the upper atmosphere above the Grand Tetons in 1972.

These instances led astronomers to begin seriously charting Apollo asteroids, and what they discovered was quite disturbing. Given the number of impact craters found on Earth—more than 180 by 1991—and the number of similar craters located on the Moon, it was judged that the chances of an asteroid striking the earth within the next 50 years were about 1 in 6,000. For comparison's sake, it was also determined that one's chances of being accidentally electrocuted were figured to be 1 in 5,000, or of dying from a gunshot wound were 1 in 2,000.

That's not all. Some of these Apollo asteroids were mighty big. Many paleontologists believed that a collision between Earth and a medium-size asteroid had been responsible for the sudden extinction of the dinosaurs. If a similar "dinosaur killer" were to strike Earth, then all the combined effects—earthquakes, tsunamis, a drastic drop of the global temperature due to sunlight being blotted out by debris being thrown into the atmosphere by the explosive impact, subsequent worldwide crop failures because of the prolonged winter and the acid rain which would follow, a possible shift in Earth's magnetic field, and more of the same happy stuff—could easily spell dee-double oh-em for mankind.

While the politically correct were still arguing over whether the global populace should instead be called humankind, personkind, or womynkind, a few other people who knew shiftfire when they smelled it began to watch the skies. They also argued that the human species should engage in preventive measures: establishing satellites which would act as first-warning sentries, using Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) technology to build a just-in-case orbital defense system, maybe paying a little more attention to this sort of thing, just for a change.

To most people, though, this scenario sounded too much like a bad science fiction movie. Like, y'know, the one with Sean Connery and Natalie Wood. In the United States, after several public hearings on the matter, the members of Congress grudgingly sprinkled a little extra money on NASA for additional research before they returned their attention to their re-election bids. One

in 6,000 in the next 50. . . hey, that's not so bad. That's better odds than the *Washington Post* finding out that I've been taking illegal campaign contributions or that I used to smoke pot while I was in college. Now *these* are things to be concerned about.

So the matter dropped out of the newspapers again, and we recommenced to worry about bombs in Iraq and the South American rain forests and whether Michael Jackson had found a steady girlfriend or if Princess Di was really, *really* happy. . . and all of a sudden, one nice day in April, the astronomers at the Kitt Peak Observatory in Arizona, while training the telescope at the Pleiades constellation, accidentally saw something large and non-reflective blotting out the stars.

Phone calls and faxes were hurriedly sent to other observatories across the northern hemisphere, and telescopes from California to Mexico to England to Russia were hastily realigned toward the same celestial coordinates. The news was confirmed within the next 24 hours. Just as positive as my chances of flipping a penny and having it come up heads, that 1-in-6,000 probability had come true; the mother of all Apollo asteroids, a massive rock more than 6 miles in diameter, was hauling craggy butt out of deep space and heading straight for Earth.

An asteroid that big would weigh in excess of 1 trillion tons; when it connected with Earth at 70 times the speed of sound, the released energy of the impact would be the equivalent of 5 billion atomic bombs. And, at a mean distance of approximately 1 million miles, this particular hunk of rock was less than 20 hours away from collision, with an estimated point of impact being somewhere in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

Someone at one of the observatories which confirmed the sighting leaked the news to the Associated Press. Within an hour, AP printers across the world were ringing five bells, and by midafternoon in the midwestern United States the story had been broken on virtually every TV and radio station. Today's episode of *All My Children* was preempted; how's that for importance?

Planet Earth was in for one lousy day. And we were about to find out, for certain, what had killed the dinosaurs.

OKAY, THAT'S THE BIG PICTURE. NOW TO TELL YOU ABOUT the wabbit. . . .

I was at home in the 'burbs, struggling my way through a short story I intended to submit to *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, when my ex-wife phoned to tell me the awful news. She was in total hysterics, alternately begging me to attend mass with her at St. Whatshisname's or to rush over and jump her bones one last time before the New Madrid Fault got the hiccups. However, I had no intention of either groveling before the Almighty, who had never paid any attention to me, or boffing my ex, for much the same reason. After I suggested that she should have sex with her second husband instead but that I still loved her anyway—okay, so I lied—I hastily hung up the phone and ran into the den to switch on the TV.

Dan Rather, looking even more unhinged than usual, confirmed what Joan had just told me. The weather forecast for the next morning called for exceptionally heavy precipitation, with a long-range forecast calling for mass extinction.

Y'know, the mind works in funny ways. It's like, when you find out someone very close to you has suddenly died, you immediately begin to worry about whether you should buy some new shoes for the funeral. Trivialities come to the forefront of your attention because, at the most basic emotional level, you're not ready to accept the horror of what you've just learned.

In this case, upon finding out that the human race had just been given its layoff notice from the universe, my first thought was, irrationally enough: *Damn, now I'll never get The National Book Award.*

While Dan-O blathered about how the Defense Department was hastily trying to load nuclear warheads aboard some NASA rockets at Cape Canaveral as a last-ditch attempt to deflect the asteroid from its present trajectory—and all the usual network experts

It was quickly approaching, careening out of deep space at 50,000 miles per hour...

were saying fat chance, for this or that reason—I wandered over to my vanity shelf and began to look over my life's work.

Every writer has a vanity shelf. It's the place where he or she proudly displays copies of his or her published work, just in case Orville Prescott stops by and wants to talk shop. Mine was reasonably large: four novels, in both hardcover and paperback, plus a couple of dozen short stories printed in everything from *The Missouri Review* to one of Martin Greenberg's anthologies to *Analog*. Two of the novels were science fiction, one was horror, and the latest book was a political thriller with high-literary pretensions. No major awards, but the revenues had been sufficient enough to keep me in semi-permanent retirement from advertising. As I half-listened to the parade of colonels, astronomers, White House spokesmen, Jerry Pournelle and the Rev. Billy Graham, all giving their unwanted opinions on what doomsday meant to them, I found myself fingering the dusty spines of my books, remembering all the nights which had gone into the creation of each work.

It had been more than a career. It had been a *life*, and a pretty good one at that. I had no regrets over what I had done with my 34 years. . . .

Except one.

I had never gotten even with George T. Wabbit.

George T. Wabbit was the publisher, editor, and major contributor of *Scrivener*, a rather pretentious title for what was essentially a low-circulation journal of literary viscosity. I had it on good information from a mutual acquaintance that Wabbit was a failed writer, a wannabe who had done all the usual workshops and university courses, had written short stories and novels and poems and screenplays, but yet had been unable to get his work published in any professional venue save the "Humor In Uniform" column of *Reader's Digest*. Some people simply keep on trying until they either get it right or give up completely and content themselves with reading, but poor George had been driven crazy by his envy and spite for virtually any author who had been successful in the craft.

Using inherited money, he had started the quarterly *Scrivener* as, in his own words, "a new ballpark for alternative literary expression." Meaning, since he couldn't win in the big-league stadiums, he scratched out shorter baselines in his own minor-league diamond.

No strikes and no outs for the local heroes, but plenty of spitballs for the visiting team. Self-publishing is often an acceptable recourse—I've read some stuff in the small press which beats the crap out of anything Knopf put out last month—but Wabbit chose to use *Scrivener* as a blunt instrument. Although some of the magazine's contents were devoted either to publishing unreadable short stories, mostly written by other local wannabes who had become part of his clique (sample titles: "I'm Home!" She Cried To Her Dog" and "Splatter Orgasm, Version 3.5"), it was mostly devoted to reviews of books published by established authors, again those who lived in the St. Louis area.

These reviews were usually written by Wabbit himself. They were, by and large, attacks upon anyone whose work had been published, with the exception of a small handful of authors who had met "higher literary standards," meaning that (a.) he wished to kiss their ass, (b.) that they were sufficiently obscure as to pose no threat to Wabbit's ego, or (c.) they had once been nice to him by granting him an interview for his rag. It was Wabbit's conceit that because he and his cronies couldn't be published, any writer

who had been successful or whose works were popular had "sold out" to the conspiratorial forces of big-time publishing, and thus needed to be exposed as frauds. In truth, *Scrivener* was a grandiose exercise in sour grapes, the means by which he either wished to gain some sort of low-rent respectability or badger those authors he secretly envied.

I first met Wabbit after I had read from my first novel, *Highway Star*, at the St. Louis County Library, shortly after the book was published. The reading had been sparsely attended, mostly by retirees and bored teenagers who had slammed the door on the way out, so when he had grandly introduced himself to me as "another slave in the lit'r'y vineyard" and asked me if I wanted to have a beer, I was ready for a stroke, because there's nothing worse than reading aloud to a dead audience. He seemed like a nice guy, if a little pompous, so I accepted the invitation. He said he knew of a quiet little place—"it's outside walking distance," he said, "can I give you a lift?"—so I left my car in the library parking lot. Two writers, going out for an afternoon beer. What's the harm?

I had assumed that he intended to go somewhere nearby. What I didn't realize, until he suddenly got on the interstate, was that his "quiet little place" was all the way downtown. . . Casey's Bar & Grill, in fact. But I didn't say anything, figuring that he would take me back to the library once we had a beer or two. But once we actually got to the bar and we had settled down at a table with a couple of Budweisers, Wabbit eschewed the small talk and cut straight to the chase.

Because he was being actively censored by all the major publishers, he proclaimed, and because the editors within the New York literary elite were obviously unaware of his genius, he needed to collaborate with someone who—although he had admittedly been successful in finding a supportive publisher—obviously needed some polishing before he realized his full potential.

Uh-huh, I said.

Then he began to tell me all the flaws he had perceived in *Highway Star*. There weren't many. Just the plot, the theme, the characters, the setting, the beginning, the middle, and the end. But I still had the potential to become a truly great author, said my new friend Maxwell Perkins, if only I worked closely with a more talented person who could guide me toward the one true light.

Uh-huh, I said.

Well, says Wabbit, who by now was beginning to more closely resemble a boa constrictor than a bunny, I have a proposal. I will give you the plot of a truly incredible novel, titled *Reflections In A Time-Warped Pond*. . . d'ya like it? . . . anyway, you will write it for me, and I will do the final editing. We will then put both our names on the book. . . naturally, my name will appear first on the cover. . . sell it to your publisher, and split the advance and royalties on a 50-50 basis. Of course, I would be entitled to all of the subsidiary sales. . . book club rights, foreign translations, movie options. . . since it was my idea in the first place.

Uh-huh, I said.

Wabbit warmed to the subject. The story was about a time traveler from A.D. 3600 who had journeyed back through the fourth dimension to 1992, where he intended to seduce one of his own ancestors, his great-to-the-umpteenth-power grandmother, with whom the time traveler had fallen in love after glimpsing her picture in an old family album. Once they had met and had sex a few times, the two of them would travel across the country to Washington D.C., fleeing FBI and CIA agents who

wanted the time machine, where they would then assassinate Dan Quayle, whom everyone in far future knew was directly responsible for. . . .

Uh-uh, I said, holding up my hand. No way. Won't work.

Wabbit looked irritated. Why not? he demanded. It's the perfect plot.

Yeah, I said, but it needs a different title. We should call it. . . um, how about *Blow It Out Your Ass*?

And then I rose from the table, walked out of the bar, and hailed a cab to take me back to the library. Cost me \$15 for the return trip, but it was worth every penny to get away from the schmuck.

I thought that was the end of the matter, but it wasn't. Two months later, the latest issue of *Scrivener* appeared in my mailbox. No note was attached, but it was obviously Wabbit's calling-card; it featured a very long review of *Highway Star*, written by the scorned would-be collaborator himself, which savaged my novel with the delight that only a jealous mind can summon. Three pages of misinterpretations, innuendo and outright contempt, never once mentioning the fact that we had ever met, let alone the shifty deal into which he had attempted to sucker me. He was canny enough to stop just short of breaking libel laws, though, knowing well that one can't successfully sue over a matter of artistic opinion.

Wabbit's essay irritated me, to be sure, but there was nothing I could do about it. I eventually got over it, though, dismissing it as cheap revenge by a loser. *Highway Star* did well in the bookstores and most of the other reviews were kind, so I soon forgot about Wabbit again. Then, a year later, my second novel was published, and a shorter yet no less vicious review of it was published in *Scrivener*. It was also penned by that pesky Wabbit, but this time he also sent a copy to my publisher.

And this was the way it continued for the next four years. I published another novel and several short stories, and each time anything appearing under my byline was published, Wabbit sank his claws into the work. Every time a review appeared, copies of *Scrivener* were sent both to myself and to my editors, not only to vex me but also as a blatant attempt to sabotage my career.

Wabbit's words didn't harm my professional associations. My editors knew that he was an envious crank with a grudge and therefore didn't take him seriously. The few other professionals I knew in the St. Louis area were aware that he held nothing but contempt for published writers, particularly those who were in the region. A couple of them, Chris Lasky and Sarah Jean Storrow, had also been victimized by Wabbit's rag; through correspondence and phone conversations and occasional get-togethers, both of them commiserated with me.

And then the *Scrivener* review of my fourth novel, *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*, was published.

It wasn't a review. Not exactly. Just three Polaroid snapshots, printed at the beginning of the *Scrivener's* book review page. . . .

The day after the latest issue hit the local magazine racks, Chris called me and asked if I wanted to go have a couple of beers. He had seen the pictures and figured that I needed to get drunk. I said no, he said yes; Chris is bigger than I am, so I told him that I'd meet him that night down on Delmar Boulevard.

"He's a eunuch," Chris said to me over drinks at Blueberry Hill. His two crime novels, *Arch Enemies* and *Good Friday*, had also been given the so-called "Wabbit Test," which was now the title of George's review column. The wabbit had lived, but Chris' books had been given an abortion. Some test. "I wouldn't get mad at him. . . just pity the poor jerk. It's the only way he can get back at you and me."

"I'd like to do more than pity him," I said. I had already tucked in a couple of Bloody Marys, so I was feeling good and pissed off.

"Fact is, I'd like to murder the asshole."

"Ignore him."

"You ignore you. Did you see that picture? He. . . ."

"Yeah, I know, I saw it." Chris took another swig from his beer.

"Y'know, he hangs out every night at some beer joint down by the river. . . ."

"Casey's Bar & Grill."

"That's the place." Chris nodded his head as he signaled the waiter for another round. "We could always go down there later. Take him out in the alley and give him writing lessons. First-person perspective on pain and suffering. . . maybe it'll help change his mind about what he writes about us."

"Good idea. Let's go." Hell, it wasn't a bad idea. I was sick of receiving the bastard's quarterly hate mail. And this last bit. . . .

I started to push back my chair, but Lasky caught my wrist and pulled me back. "Forget it, kid," he said. "I was just joking. . . and you couldn't change his mind even if it was the end of the world. Now gimme your keys and have another beer."

That was three months ago. Now it *was* the end of the world, and I was ready to see if the wabbit was ready to change his mind.

Either that, or I'd blow it all over the floor of Casey's Bar & Grill.

PROBLEM WAS, I WASN'T THE FIRST PERSON TO GET THE VERY same idea.

Before Wabbit could say anything, before I even had the chance to thumb back the hammer of my Smith & Wesson, I heard the unmistakable metallic click of a revolver cocking behind me.

Then another gun was cocked, this time from on the other side of Wabbit. . . .

And then a third, now a little further down the bar. . . .

Then a fourth gun was chambered, again from behind me.

Cannon to the left of me, cannon to my right. . . through the corners of my eyes, I glanced first one way, then the other. Four gun barrels were aimed straight at me.

I damn near shit a brick. The bartender had already thrown himself to the floor, and if Wabbit hadn't been under my own gun, he might have done the same. My first thought was that the sumbitch had actually thought to hire bodyguards for his last night on the town, but—astonishingly enough—I could see that his own face was blanched, his eyes wide with utter fear, sweat matting his hair against his forehead.

Then a familiar voice came from behind the third gun. "Hold it, guys. I know him. He's one of us. . . ."

"Chris?" I gasped. "Is that you, buddy?"

"It's me," Lasky said. "Now lower your pistol and let's discuss this little coincidence."

I pulled my finger away from the trigger and slowly relaxed the hammer. Around me, I heard the other guns doing the same thing. The bartender, a skinny college kid, reluctantly reappeared from behind the bar. Wabbit, however, looked neither relieved nor smug about his mistake. He closed his eyes and took a long, deep breath as his trembling hands closed around the beer mug in front of him, but he didn't say a word.

That gave me a little bit of satisfaction, but I didn't say anything. Instead, I took the gun away from Wabbit's neck and lowered it to my side, then I looked at the people sitting on the barstools around us. Over there, two stools down from Wabbit, was Chris Lasky, placing his Colt on the polished bartop and picking up his beer.

And seated between him and Wabbit, wearing an L.L. Bean parka which effectively disguised her feminine physique, was Sarah Jean Storrow. The Pulitzer-nominated author of *Twilight Forest* gave me a sweet smile as she rested her own gun on the counter, carefully keeping out of Wabbit's reach. She looked like your favorite liberal-arts college professor, if your favorite liberal-arts college professor carried a rod into a waterfront dive.

"Ray Oppenheimer," someone behind me said, and I turned around to see an older man with a white beard, holding a beer in one hand and a Colt revolver in the other. "Glad to meet you. Loved your last book."

"Sure. . . um, thanks." Raymond Alec Oppenheimer, whom I have never met but whom I knew by reputation. Lived in Col-

I heard the unmistakable metallic click of a revolver cocking behind me.

linsville, Illinois, just over on the other side of the Big Muddy. Author of *The Last Words of Sitting Bull*, *The Prairie Schooner*, and a couple of other noted Old West historical novels which I hadn't read. He nodded once, keeping his narrow eyes trained on Wabbit.

"I'm Gary Tyson," a longhaired '60s throwback behind Ray spoke up; he shifted the Glock .45 into his left hand as he extended his right hand to me. "I haven't read your stuff, but I hear it's pretty good."

"Um . . . yeah, okay." I shook his hand, then it dawned on me. "Hey, aren't you G.P. Tyson? The guy who wrote . . . ah, what was it? . . . *I Slept With J. Edgar Hoover*?"

"C'est moi," he said, grinning widely.

I pumped his hand more vigorously. I had heard of him, too; he lived out in St. Charles County. "Glad to meet you," I said. "That was a fun novel. I really liked the bit when the hippies kidnapped Elvis from Graceland and smuggled him to Woodstock . . ."

What was I saying? Was this a literary convocation or a chapter meeting of the National Rifle Association? "What the hell are you guys doing here?" I nearly shouted. "I mean, what are you . . .?"

Everyone broke down laughing. Everyone, that is, except the bartender and George T. Wabbit, both of whom looked as if they couldn't wait for that goddamn asteroid to strike. Wabbit was staring straight ahead at the rows of liquor bottles on the shelf, his fleshy lower lip shivering ever so slightly.

The bartender's eyes were racing back and forth, trying to watch all of us at the same time. "I think . . ." he began weakly, then he cleared his throat and tried again. "I think I need to get another quarter keg from the cooler." He nervously pointed behind him, toward the rear of the barroom. "I mean, y'all might be thirsty later. . . I mean, after. . ."

"Get out of here, kid," Ray Oppenheimer growled, his inflection somewhere between John Wayne and Clint Eastwood. "We won't leave you a mess, I promise." The kid still looked uncertain. "G'wan now," Ray added. "Git. . ."

The bartender glanced once more at Wabbit. "Sorry, George," he whispered, and then he fled his post, heading not for the cooler but for the fire exit adjacent to the bar. Everyone ignored his exit except George, who watched his exit with cowardly avarice. One of his legs lowered from the rungs of his barstool. . .

"Not you, buddy." Chris placed his right hand over his gun as his voice dropped menacingly, and Wabbit froze solid. "We're not done with you yet."

NOW IT DAWNED UPON ME, THE TRUTH HITTING ME WITH A fierce clarity which usually occurs only when an unanticipated twist occurs in a storyline, late at night when the creative subconscious delivers a bonus. Five writers, all living in the same general vicinity, had come to the same place at the same time, each of them with murder in their hearts. None of whom had much in common except for one thing: each had been reviled and insulted, lambasted and roasted, our works denigrated and held up for public humiliation, by this one man.

And now, quite unexpectedly, an opportunity had come for the seeking of revenge. Public order had broken down and the law was a joke; civilization was coming to a closure, and by tomorrow all our books would be burned as firewood against the long ice age at the end of history.

Throughout the world, I realized as I stood there in the grubby barroom near the Mississippi River, countless other scores were being settled. It was the night of wicked bad karma, of taking care of past business, of giving the devil his due, of paying back old bills. The night when a long-dormant, unsatisfied ache for revenge would finally be satisfied.

Chris, Sarah, Ray, Gary, myself—each of us had suffered need-less, petty sniping from someone who's only justification had been his own envy, our novels and stories disemboweled for the sake of his own cheap thrills and the vicarious pleasure of other failures and would-be writers, with no acceptable course of reprisal except for private grousing. . .

And now it was payback time.

Each of us had known where the wabbit kept his hole, and we had each come down here to blow the louse to kingdom come. We didn't want the cold or slow starvation or an earthquake or a street gang to do it for us.

Of course, Wabbit hadn't ever thought it would come to this, being surrounded by five vengeful authors who were packing heat. Not daring to meet our eyes, he stared straight at the mirrored wall on the other side of the stool, until I turned my head and looked straight at his reflection. For a few moments our eyes met—the first time we had ever seen each other, face to face, since that last encounter in this same barroom—and I was satisfied to catch a glimpse of his naked fear before his gaze darted away again.

No one said anything. We waited for him to speak. When he finally opened his mouth, I could almost hear the crack of his dry throat. "I didn't think," he said slowly, "that you'd take it so personally."

Each of us glanced at one another, but still no one said a word. "I mean," he went on, speaking a little more quickly now, "it wasn't about any of you, was it? I was just writing about your books, not about you yourselves. It was just about the words you had put on pages, that's all it was about. A little honest criticism, right?"

"Honest criticism. Hmmm. . . ." Chris tapped a forefinger against the rim of his beer mug. "When you wrote that review of *Arch Enemies*, you said that my main character, Joshua Sparrow, was . . . how did you say it? . . . yeah, now I remember. 'He's obviously destined to be another tiresome continuing hero, a detective who will reappear in countless sequels as the author rewrites the same story again and again, à la fellow hacks like Brett Halliday and Mickey Spillane.' Isn't that what you said, George?"

Wabbit reluctantly nodded his head. "But Sparrow died at the end of *Arch Enemies*," Chris said quietly. "He was shot to death by his girlfriend, so how could he reappear in a sequel? If you had bothered to finish the book before you wrote your honest criticism, you would have known this."

"I was just trying to make a general point!" Wabbit snapped back. "I didn't mean Sparrow in particular! What I meant was. . . um. . ."

"The sort of thing I write?" Chris asked. His fingers drummed the bartop next to his gun. "And, by the way, what did you mean when you called my second novel 'another redundant episode in the Joshua Sparrow series?' Since Sparrow was dead, how could he be in *Good Friday*?"

Wabbit didn't reply.

Now Sarah Storrow spoke up. "I greatly appreciated the candor of your remarks regarding *Moonlight*," she said, not looking up from her folded hands. "Especially the part when you claimed

that the suicide of the protagonist's daughter was. . .well, I believe you said that it was hopelessly clichéd and contrived, with barely any more emotion given to the scene than if I had been blowing my nose."

"I thought it seemed that way," Wabbit began. "She hanged herself in her mother's closet, so that seemed like it wasn't. . ."

He glanced at her, and although she was still staring at her hands, he saw the look on her face. His words trailed off.

"Dramatic enough?" she finished. "Not realistic to you? If she had. . .oh, say, doused herself in gasoline and immolated herself in front of City Hall, would you have considered that original enough for your esteemed tastes?"

He nervously licked his lips "There could have been more. . .catharsis."

"Catharsis. I see." Sarah's hands clenched together until her knuckles went white. "If you had bothered to read the afterword, Mr. Wabbit," she said, now looking straight at him, "you would have known that the character's demise was based upon the suicide of my own daughter, and that's exactly the way it happened. Like the novel's protagonist, I was the one who found her. It took me three years to write that single chapter, sir. . .and only a scoundrel who had not finished reading my novel before writing a review wouldn't have known that."

Wabbit winced, but he said nothing. He couldn't bring himself to meet her gaze. I wouldn't have wanted to look at her either.

"When you published the review of *The Prairie Schooner*," Ray Oppenheimer began as he picked up his beer and took a sip, "you accused me of being sloppy with my research of the settlement of Missouri. Since your publication accepted letters from its readers, I wrote you one which rebutted your comments, point by point, with all the appropriate references. Why didn't you print my letter, Georgie-boy?"

"I lost the letter, that's all. . ."

Oppenheimer shook his head. "Uh-uh. That's not good enough, son. I sent that same letter to you three times. . .the third time by registered mail, for which I received a return slip. Of course, you printed the letters which agreed with your review, but I guess those weren't lost."

"And there were two of them!" Wabbit retorted.

"Uh-huh. That there were. . .and both were sent by folks who regularly contributed articles and stories to the *Scrivener*. Each of 'em saying much the same thing. Hell of a coincidence. . ."

Ray shrugged as he set the mug back on the counter, just loudly enough to make Wabbit flinch. "'Course now, you're no history expert, so I can't fault you on not knowing some things. . .but are you really sure about things when you claimed that there weren't no Jews in Missouri during the 1800s? If so, I ought to show you my great-grandfather's diary. It was one of my main sources for the book. He was a rabbi right here in St. Louis, back in the 1880s. Y'know, I recall mentioning that in my own afterword, too."

"I'm not anti-Semitic!" Wabbit angrily insisted. For the first time, he dared to look someone straight in the eye. "Whatever you want to make of it, pal, I wasn't trying to put down Jews!"

Ray opened his hands. "I didn't say you were," he said easily. "I'm just saying that you're anti-writer. That's all."

"'Scuse me," Gary Tyson said as he raised a hand, "but I got something I want to say on that point."

Oppenheimer graciously yielded the floor to Tyson and we turned our attention to him. Tyson leaned forward against the bar, staring at Wabbit. "Do you remember when you wrote that piece about my book?"

"But there was nothing factual about it!" Wabbit shot back. "It was a farce. . .!"

"Sure it was farcical," Tyson said, his face almost bland. "It was *meant* to be a farce. Elvis performing at Woodstock? Marilyn having an affair with Pope Paul? The Apollo 11 astronauts dropping acid on the way to the Moon? Timothy Leary running for president against Nixon in '68? Only an idiot would have

thought it was a true-life recounting of the facts. It was straight-out surrealistic fantasy. Every other critic who read the book got the joke. Even if they hated the book, at least they treated it on its own merits. The *New York Times* blasted it, but at least they treated it fairly."

He jabbed a finger at Wabbit as he looked at us. "But you know what this dickless wonder did instead? He deliberately misrepresented the book as a factual novel, claiming that I had tried to write narrative journalism like Norman Mailer's *The Armies of The Night*. . .and then critiqued the book on those lines!"

"It was a matter of opinion," Wabbit said, his voice rising in a defensive whine. "There's nothing you can have against me on that count. I call 'em as I see 'em, that's all. . ."

"No," Tyson retorted, "you call 'em as you *want* to see 'em. There's a difference. You deliberately ignore the author's intentions and pass judgment according to whatever paradigm you've seen fit at the time. As long as you're the dude who comes out ahead. . ."

"OK! OK! I give up! What am I supposed to do, for Chrissakes?" Wabbit threw up his hands in what we were supposed to see as a helpless gesture. "Come over to your house with my review and ask for your opinion? Ask you what you meant to say when you wrote this paragraph or that? Get written permission to write about your books? I'm a critic, for the love of God!"

For a few moments, no one replied.

"No," I said finally. "You're not expected to do any of those things, and we've never asked you to do them. All you're expected to do, George, is to be an honest man. . ."

Now it was my turn.

I leaned over his shoulder, picked up the copy of *Scrivener* I had dropped in front of him when I had first walked into the bar, and held it closer to his face. "When you did this," I asked, "what did you intend to prove?"

At the top of the page, printed in customary boldface type, were the title of my fourth book, my name, the book's publisher, its price and ISBN number. All the usual stuff. Except the review had no words after that. . .only three snapshot photos.

The first photo showed a copy of *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway* laying on the ground in someone's backyard.

The second photo showed the same book, except this time it had been ripped to shreds. The pages, each methodically torn out of the book's saddle-stitched binding, lay in a dismal pile on the ground. A pile of worthless trash, except that the dustcover had been carefully placed next to the heap so that the title and the author's name were legible.

The third photo showed a man—shot from only the waist down, but it unmistakably was Wabbit himself, judging from the size of his gut—standing in front of the pile. The camera had been skillfully placed so that no obscenity laws were broken, but a stream of fluid ejecting from the open fly of his trousers onto the pages clearly showed what was going on.

No words were necessary.

Wabbit stared at the magazine for a few moments. . .then a strange giggle began to rise from the back of his throat. I felt cold hatred begin to surge within me even as he self-consciously clamped a hand over his mouth and squeezed his eyes shut, and on its own volition my right hand began to raise the gun back to his neck. . .

Then I caught a glimpse of Chris, saw him shaking his head, and I lowered the gun again.

"Speak up, George," I said ever so softly. "I couldn't hear you."

George Wabbit somehow managed to put a clamp on his laughter. He silently stared at the photos for another minute, then he angrily shoved the magazine away. "Oh, for Chrissakes!" he snapped. "You know it was a joke, just as I know this is a joke! You guys aren't murderers, you're writers. . .!"

I shut my eyes for a few seconds. After a little while the hammering in my skull slowed down enough that I could speak again. "You may be right," I said slowly. "I'm not a killer, and I don't think the others are either. But let me ask you this. . ."

Five writers had come to the same place with murder in their hearts.

I sat down on the barstool next to him, still holding the magazine in front of his face. "What's the difference between ripping apart a book, pissing on it, and taking pictures of the event for publication... and burning it in public? In fact, why not get hold of a lot of copies and burn them in a bonfire? They used to do that a lot in Nazi Germany..."

"Aw, c'mon..." Wabbit began.

"No, I mean it. And it doesn't stop with the Nazis. We've had it here in America, too. Books being taken out of libraries and torched, city councils and school boards banning everything from *Huckleberry Finn* to *The Tropic of Cancer* to *Slaughterhouse-Five*..."

"I wasn't suggesting that it be banned!" he shouted.

"No," I said, "but the intent was much the same. Tell me, what's the difference between what you did to my novel and what the Nazis did to anything which wasn't believed to be Aryan literature?"

Wabbit's jaw trembled. For a few moments his lips shuddered as he tried to force a reply. If he was trying to say something—it was just a joke or I'm not a fascist or even it's a free country, I can do whatever I like—I didn't wait for the words to come out of his mouth.

"And to answer something you said before," I went on, "yeah, I'm a writer, and I'm fucking proud of it. My books are like my own children. They're a part of me, not something I bang out for money or cheap fame. They may not be perfect. Some of them have faults and blemishes, I'll admit that, but they're still my kids. And when someone insults my children..."

"When someone lies about them," Chris interrupted.

"When someone makes them out to be something they ain't," Ray added.

"When someone plays jokes at their expense," said Gary.

"When someone attempts to harm them," Sarah whispered in a voice as chill as the night itself. . . .

I raised the gun in my hand and placed it against the back of the wabbit's head. "Then we tend to get really pissed off," I murmured as my finger slipped within the trigger guard.

Wabbit closed his eyes, his mouth hanging open. There was the sudden stench of urine as he whizzed again... not on my book this time, but in his pants.

It could have been a good joke, but no one was laughing.

IF THIS WERE A WORK OF FICTION, I COULD HAVE ENDED IT ANY number of ways. I shot him in the head and his brains were splattered all over the counter. Or we forced him out to the alley, lined him up against the wall, and gave him the Gary Gilmore treatment. Or, even more elaborately—and this is the one I particularly like—we made him strip buck-naked, marched him out of the bar and down the Landing to the Missouri side of the Eads Bridge, where the Metro Link light-rail system crosses the Mississippi into Illinois, where we would have given him a sporting chance to cross the bridge on foot before the train came through... and, of course, we had timed it so that he was given a choice between trying to outrun an oncoming train or surviving a jump from the bridge.

We did none of the above.

Instead, I removed the gun from his head and, one at a time, we turned away from the bar and silently walked out of Casey's. He was right on one thing; we were writers, not killers, despite our guns and our anger. Not even at this time, not even in this place. We had made our point, and he would remember it, even

if by this time next week he was starving to death in the dark and the cold.

Killing him would have been pointless. What we had done to him was worse than homicide. So we just left him there, alone with himself. I was the last to leave, and I didn't look back once as I strode out of Casey's Bar & Grill.

Chris' Bronco was parked only a half-block away; he had a full tank of gas, so we piled inside. My house was closest and I had plenty of beer in the fridge, and I knew some oddball ways through the back streets which would take us there without having to use the swamped highways, so we used them to get us there. It took us a while; we had to dodge burning buildings and rioters and half-assed police blockades, and after a while Chris switched off the radio with its tape-looped Emergency Broadcast System warnings, and finally we made our way to my place.

I don't know what we were thinking when we made the trip, because hardly anyone spoke to each other during the long drive, except for me giving Chris the proper directions. Chris and I were loners, but the other guys had families; they were undoubtedly worried about their lives. But we had almost murdered someone that night, and I think we all needed time to be together, even if it was huddled together in the back of an overweight Ford or camping out in someone's house.

AT ANY RATE, YOU KNOW THE REST OF THE STORY. NASA and the Pentagon succeeded; three Titan-4 missiles, carrying multi-megaton nuclear warheads were launched from Cape Canaveral; along with the nuke-carrying Proton rockets launched by the Soviets, they detonated near the asteroid deflecting its trajectory. The asteroid shaved past Earth by about 200,000 miles—too damn close—and by 4 a.m. the five of us, who had stood sleepless watch during the night, caught the final word on CNN.

The world was safe again... sort of. In the end, hundreds of thousands of lives had been lost in the panic. The combined cost of property damage had soared into the trillions of dollars. A couple of governments had been toppled. Some people were given new reasons to believe in God; others blessed the Air Force, NASA, Glavkosmos, nuclear bombs and their local congressmen.

So be it. We picked up the pieces and went from there. Three months later, we were again wondering whether Michael Jackson was gay or if Princess Di was content with Prince Chuck. And a year later, when the inevitable ABC made-for-TV movie about the event was aired, it bombed in the ratings because NBC chose the same night to broadcast an *L.A. Law* reunion special.

And no one ever heard from George T. Wabbit again.

No more issues of *Scrivener* were ever published. I was told that he had left town; someone else said that he had joined some religious cult and was now selling flowers on a street corner in San Antonio, or maybe it was San Francisco. Another person said that he was now working for David Duke in Louisiana, trying to get all my novels removed from the bookstores in Louisiana. And, six years later, after I received the National Book Award for best short-story collection of the year, I was informed that he had been in the audience, booing very loudly when I had walked to the podium to accept the prize.

Who knows the truth?

And who cares?

The wabbit was dead. I'm not sure if he had ever been alive in the first place. □

Wayne Barlowe's cosmic portraits bring the alien to life.

EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL MICHELANGELO

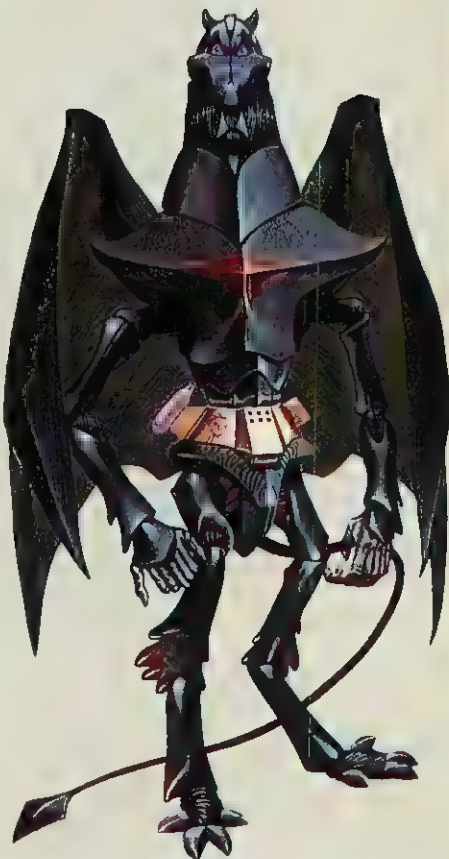
BY FREDERIK POHL

Fifteen years ago or so I went to visit some friends in New York, and when I got there I found they were all clustered over a book. Before I got my coat off they were waving me over to look at a particular page. "See anybody you know?" one of them asked, pointing to a picture of a green creature with fur, tentacles and a great many twinkly little eyes.

Well, I did. I knew that particular fellow pretty well, in fact, because I had invented him as a character for my novel, *The Age of the Pussyfoot*. What I hadn't realized was that anyone else knew so accurately what my green Sirian looked like, because that was the first I'd seen of *Barlowe's Guide to Extraterrestrials* (published by Workman).

Like everybody else at the party, I spent much of the rest of the evening poring over the book. It was immediately obvious that this man Barlowe had read a lot of science fiction and, what's more, had done a lot of thinking about what he read. That wasn't all of it, either. He had some big advantages over the rest of us galactic dreamers—such as a considerable artistic gift, as well as long years of training, plus the willingness to put in the endless hours of work it took to make tangible the often fuzzy notions of the writers. The best word for the result was "wonderful."

Barlowe's Guide turned out to be full of old friends. Doc Smith's Velantians were

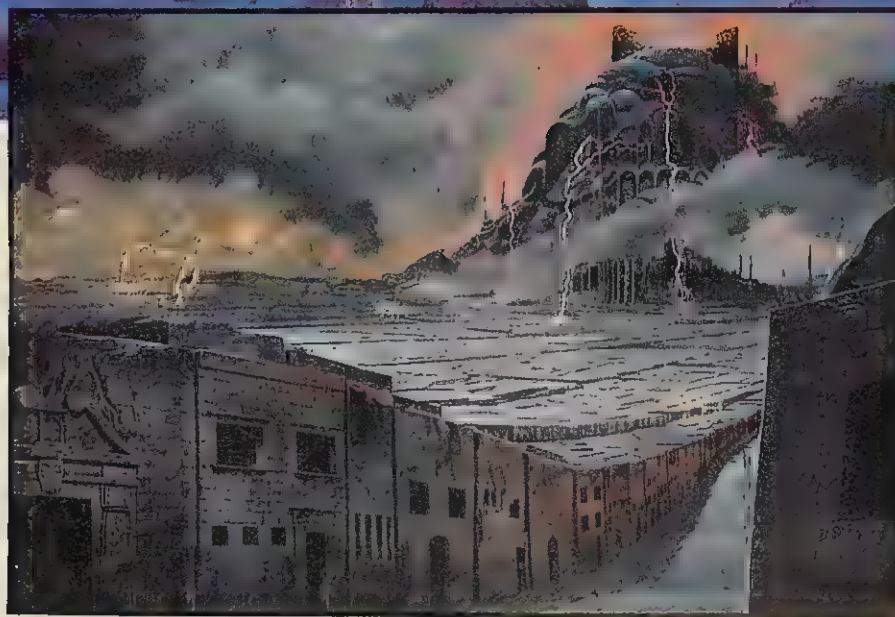


there, and for the first time I had a tangible idea of what my boyhood pal, the "snaky" Velantian Lensman named Worsel, actually might have looked like. Also present were Arthur Clarke's Overlord from *Childhood's End*, the Thrint from Larry Niven's *World of Ptavvs*, the Lithians Jim Blish had created for *A Case of Conscience* and more than 40 others. These were not only drawn in full color to be admired, but, often enough, complete with detailed sketches of their anatomical peculiarities

and even drawings of their ontogenies. (No, that's not a euphemism for the naughty bits; it means the stages of their development from larva, or whatever, to fully formed adult.) In short, what Barlowe did was not only to draw the aliens that others had described, but to try to account for them in terms that a scientist might accept.

Obviously that was the right way to go—the quarter-million copies of the *Guide* now in print prove that—but what made him go to all that trouble in the first place? He had the best of reasons: Wayne Barlowe is a science fiction artist. He isn't willing to draw arbitrary monsters, he wants to





*FAR LEFT: Arthur C. Clarke introduced SF readers to *The Overlord* in his classic novel *Childhood's End*, but Barlowe was the first to visualize him so perfectly. ABOVE: At a watering hole on the planet Darwin IV, diverse species gather in peace, including a distant pair of colorful earthbound floaters called Brainballs. From the book *Expedition*. LEFT: A street scene in the Underworld, from the artist's pet project and current work in progress, *Barlowe's Guide to Hell*.*



ABOVE: The skys of Darwin IV are alive with *Skewers*, whose strong accordion-like wing muscles allow them to control their flight through steep dives as well as lengthy glides.
 RIGHT: In this depiction of a scene from a short story by Rebecca Ore, an alien bootlegger seems ready to sample his wares.





account for them scientifically. He spells it out for us in his introduction to *Barlowe's Guide*: "Magic can put a cat's head on a human torso, but only science will describe why it's there, how it evolved, where it lived, what it ate and drank."

Long ago, when I had the unbelievable good luck of falling into my first job as a professional science fiction magazine editor (I was all of nineteen at the time), I needed to assemble a staff of illustrators in a hurry. I knew little about such things, but luck was with me. My girlfriend of the time was an art student at Cooper Union, and so it was her classmates who made many of the drawings for my first few issues. After all these years, I still have a soft spot for Cooper Union artists. It pleased me to learn that Wayne Barlowe studied there, too (though several generations later), as well as at the Art Students League. Then he went on to put in an apprenticeship helping to design exhibits for that grand dame of American museums, the American Museum of Natural History—as, in fact, his father had done before him. I suspect that it was there, among the reptiles and amphibia, that he learned that it was not

enough to make the specimens look pretty; they had also to be *right*.

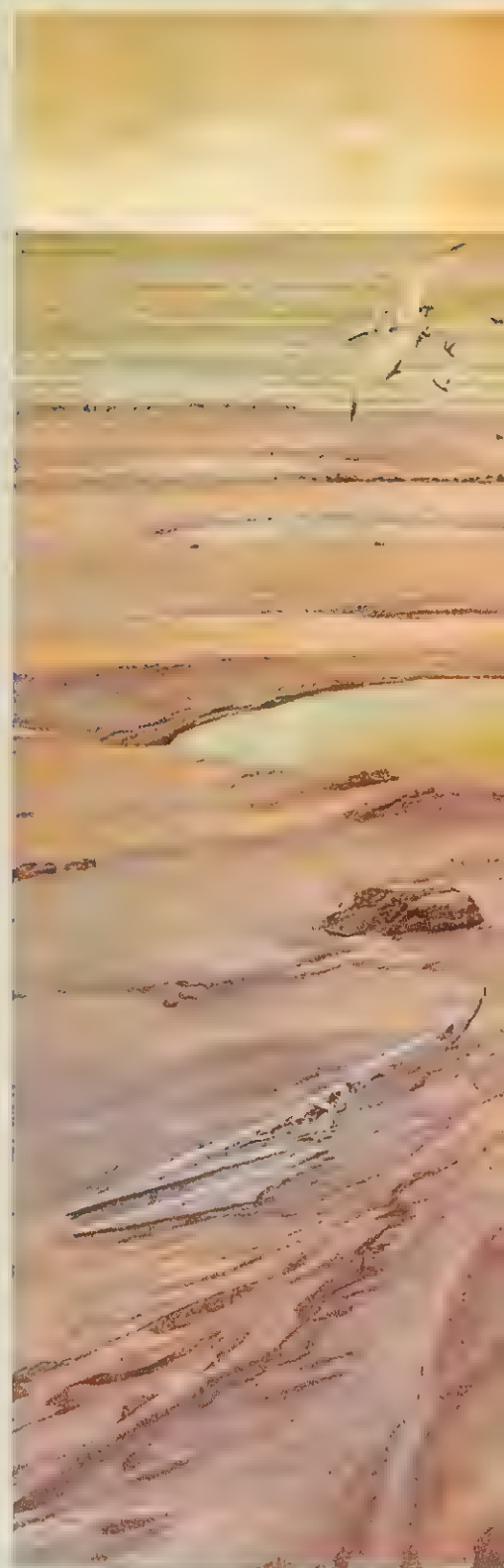
But giving form to other people's imaginings wasn't all Wayne Barlowe wanted to do. In 1990 he went all the way with a new book, *Expedition: Being an Account in Words and Artwork of the A.D. 2358 Voyage to Darwin IV*. In *Expedition* Barlowe creates the life of an entire planet, with no constraints but his own imagination and his scientific conscience.

Darwin IV's biota include plants and animals of many forms. Some of the animals are bipeds, like ourselves, though not very *much* like our pedestrian selves. The Gyrosprinter, for instance, is a biped, all right, but instead of having its two legs side by side it has one leg in front and one in back, and uses them to bound over the terrain of Darwin IV at nearly a hundred kilometers an hour. Other Darwinians have three legs, and some have only one; some are tiny air-borne floaters (on which many of the other creatures feed, like giant whales feasting on krill). Still others are truly enormous. The awesome Keeled Groveback is two hundred feet tall and shakes the ground like an earthquake as it stalks from one nesting site to another, like a two-legged land-going ocean liner. When it nests it stays in one place for years at a time while forests spring up on its carapace—hence its name of "Groveback."

Then there are the forests themselves. The plains are dotted with stands of the



TOP: Octavia Butler has sought to describe the African American experience in an SF setting, which the artist has attempted to capture in this cover for the author's *Wildseed*. **ABOVE:** When *Newsweek* gave Barlowe free rein to create an alien, the *Elytracephaloid* was born.



carnivorous Butchertree, which reaches out and spears animals incautious enough to venture nearby; elsewhere there are shady emerald forests of nut-bearing plaque-bark trees. As the nuts ripen they strike against each other in the wind, producing the bell-like sounds of myriad xylophones.

Perhaps the strangest of Darwin IV's organism is the vast Amoebic Sea, a single continent-sized amorphous organism like an ocean of living jelly. Countless creatures live inside the Amoebic Sea, while others, like the incredible Emperor Sea Strider, as tall as a sixty-story building, prowl its surface.

"Incredible," "remarkable," "awesome,"—it's easy to run out of superlatives when one tries to describe the creatures Barlowe paints for us. But he doesn't stop there.

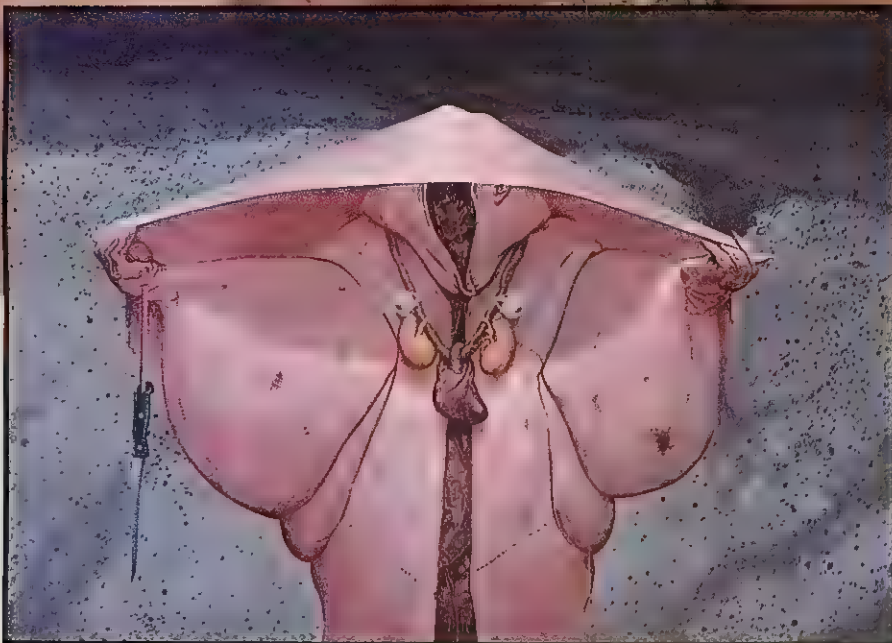
A problem with some science-fiction artists is that, marvelous as they may be at drawing bizarre mechanisms and even stranger alien creatures, they are weak on the human figure. Not Wayne Barlowe. Wit-

ness the hero from the L.E. Modsett novel *Dawn for a Distant Earth*, who stands ready to save the world, as handsome as Barlowe's aliens are disconcerting. Or take a look at the regal beauty who appeared on the cover of a novel by Octavia Butler, who at first looks as human as the woman next door... until you notice the amalgam of bird and beast popping out of her skull from where her hair should flow.

But that's all history. There's more to come. Right now on Barlowe's drawing board is the beginnings of a book of those very strange (but not imaginary) creatures from the ancient history of our own planet, the dinosaurs. Still farther in the future, when time lets him get around to it, is something that's still mostly a gleam in his eye, with only a few images so far made concrete in acrylics, with the promising title of *Barlowe's Guide to Hell*. It'll be a while before that one is in print to delight us, but it will be worth waiting for—because Wayne Douglas Barlowe always is. □

ABOVE LEFT: As this heroic vista shows, Barlowe can capture the dignity and power of humanity as well as he does the disconcertingly alien. From the L.E. Modsett novel *Dawn for a Distant Earth*. ABOVE: *The Nanotyrrannus* (Lancensis) is part of the artist's forthcoming *Dinosaur ABC*.

RIGHT: Barlowe's *Guide to Hell* will feature a literal guide who shows the artist the way. We hope only that he will return to show us more wonders.





The dreaded year 1984 is behind us now.
But for some, the horrors of 1984 are still to come.

ANOTHER COUNTRY

BY KIM ANTIEAU

Illustration by Mark Harrison

I awake with a headache. My head pounding out a message I cannot comprehend. I lie still, waiting, the sun across my face, spilling onto the sheets and making them yellow gold. Waiting. For sounds of Emil. I smile and the headache begins to fade. I close my eyes and imagine Emil leaning down to kiss me, taking me into his arms, my ear against his chest listening to his heart.

"Emil," I whisper.

Where is he? The shower isn't running. I don't smell coffee. He isn't working. We aren't working. We'll run out of savings soon.

My head throbs again, and I push myself up and out of bed.

I pause. The house is so silent. Emil usually sings, mutters, cooks. Where are his sounds? Perhaps he is waiting in the shower for me.

I walk into the bathroom. Silence. I look around. Something is different. His things are gone. His razor, toothbrush, aftershave. My heart starts pounding in my ear. What's going on? Is this some kind of joke?

"Emil?"

I go back into the bedroom. The same difference rules this room. My clothes are scattered about. But Emil's are not. He is neat, but not this neat. I open his side of the closet and sigh with relief. His clothes hang as they always have.

My heart still beats too quickly. What is wrong? What is wrong? Something.

"Emil?"

My head hurts. There is something I don't know. Where is my husband? Where is the man I adore? The man I have been with since I was a teenager watching the hills behind our village for signs of the soldiers. A flash of steel. A wisp of smoke. With Emil beside me. Until the village burned and we ran to another. And another. Finally we came to the city, where we were anonymous, where no one could tell who we were.

I sit on the bed. We came to the city because the soldier took my child. Took her from my arms, threw her down. Her tiny face in the dust, whimpering, even as I took her back, even as I screamed and pushed her against my breasts, I knew she was

dying. Dying. And Emil killed so many of them. For months. Years? Until we came here.

My stomach hurts. Remembering. The taste of the dirt on my baby's face. The laughter of the soldiers. How do men become such animals?

I have to throw up. I run to the bathroom and fall to the floor. I heave but there is nothing in my stomach. I cry.

"Emil!" Now I am angry. Why would he leave without telling me? Making me remember why we are here. Forgetting the new life we have.

I wash my face and go into the kitchen. The day is so beautiful. We will go for a walk to the park. We will hold hands and pretend that all is well with the world.

The kitchen is empty. When Emil gets home.

I shudder. This house feels so empty. As if no one lives here. I am just a ghost floating from one room to the next.

A book sits on the counter. I pull out a stool and sit and open the book. I have not seen it before. But inside is my handwriting.

"July 6. Do you remember yet? Has it been long enough? Has it sunk in? Or are you still this half person, this person who cannot remember? Should I break it to you gently? You've had an accident. You were driving home. Fog, or a stupid driver, no one knows and you cannot remember. 'I' cannot remember. You were in the hospital for two months. They tried but something is wrong with your memory. Short term memory, I think. I can't remember. You remember the past. You will forever remember Lottie's murder. You will forever remember the blood on Emil's hands, his soul, as he avenged her murder, as he went into his blood feast. But you will not remember what happened yesterday. Or the day before. Maybe after a few months, things will sink in. For instance what I tell you

next. You need it to sink in so that you do not go through this every morning.

"Emil is dead."

No.

I am frozen in place, in time. I cannot move. No.

"Emil is dead," my handwriting says. "You must believe it. We must believe it so that you don't go through this every morning."

No. I stop breathing. This cannot be.

"Turn the page."

I do. Taped to the page is a newspaper clipping. An obituary. "Emil Sanchez has joined his daughter, Lottie, in our Lord's heaven. He is survived by his wife. . . ."

No! I scream and scream. The sound vibrates all around me, shaking the walls. The walls undulate. I cannot see. I cannot stop moving. Running in circles.

No. My stomach heaves again. My circles take me to the kitchen sink and I vomit again and again. If I vomit long enough, the information will be thrown up too; it will all be gone. This is not right. Is not right. I cannot think. Can not t h i n k.

The blackness does not last. I open my eyes and remember. My eyes are swollen. My stomach hurts. My heart and soul are dying. This cannot be. Tears stream uncontrollably down my cheeks. Slowly I push myself off of the floor and go to the counter and read my words again.

"Emil is dead."

I turn past the obituary.

"He was killed in a deserted warehouse. They say he was making a bomb. Who knows? Maybe you heard it on the radio as you were driving. Is that how we smashed our brain into oblivion? Please remember. I cannot go through this every morning. The horror so fresh."

They're both gone? My husband and child. Why? Why? Because men will kill men. And children. They squabble over pieces of land like ravens over sheep carcasses.

I shake my head. Can all of this be true? Maybe if I go back to sleep, I will wake up and none of it will be real. I look at my handwriting again.

"When you go to sleep each night, you forget. And it is not wonderful. Because then the wound must be opened, anew, each morning, like Prometheus' side ripped open each morning so the vulture can again devour his new liver. Of course you didn't steal fire. You are only a wife and mother."

No longer. No longer.

I look around the apartment. Why? Why?

Tears cloud my vision. There are no answers to such questions.

I am shaking and cold. I remember from my time in the mountains, my life in the mountains, that I am going into shock. I force myself to dress and then I pull food out of the cupboards. There isn't much. I wonder how I shop. How I live. If I go to the grocery store, do I forget where I live? Do I have a job I've forgotten about? How can I survive like this?

I glance at the book again.

"Mrs. Harris next door brings you groceries. On Wednesdays you go to the hospital for therapy. For now, the government is giving you compensation. We'll see how long that lasts. You are, after all, the widow of a famous terrorist, aren't you?"

Widow? I feel as if I've been slugged. I cannot take this. Why am I all alone? I need to mourn with someone. I need to hear the wailing of my mother, Emil's mother. Sisters, brothers.

But most of them are dead, or hidden in the mountains, unable to come down without being killed. Did they have a ceremony in the mountains for Emil? Where is he buried? Next to Lottie?

I eat a sandwich and a wilted salad. The food sticks in my throat.

And then I throw up again. I open the medicine cabinet and see a bottle of pills. Sleeping pills? I remember the nurse handing them to me, saying, "If it ever gets too much for you." I can remember a bottle of pills but not the death of my own husband. I do not understand. I stumble into the bedroom and lie down.

When will this end? Now. Can I die and join my husband and child? I close my eyes and sleep.

I awaken and dusk is coming. I feel so sick. I remember what I read in the diary and know Emil is dead. Emil. He will never touch my hair. Never hold me in his arms. Never make love to me again.

I push myself to a sitting position. This is too much. Too much.

Suddenly, a shadow moves into the room. I know I should be frightened, but I do not care. If it is a burglar, I have nothing for him. Perhaps he will kill me. The graying dusk covers his body, his face. He

moves toward me. Maybe it is a hallucination. I am not frightened. Perhaps he will mourn with me.

He reaches for the lamp next to the bed and switches it on. The dusk is washed from his face.

"Emil," I whisper.

I have died. I went to sleep and died. Thank you, God.

I put my arms around him, he puts his around me and pulls me onto his lap as he sits on the bed. A perfect fit. He is flesh and blood. I feel his heart beating close to mine. His smell. My Emil.

I am dead or insane. Either way, I don't care because I have my husband back.

"Where's Lottie?" I whisper. If I can have my husband, why not my daughter?

Emil pulls away slightly.

"Lottie is dead, my love. Have you forgotten?" It is his voice, whispered. He looks at me fearfully, afraid I have lost my mind.

"No, of course I haven't forgotten." I hold him close again. I will never let him go.

His hand reaches under my shirt and gently caresses my breasts. I sigh, and the horror I have felt all day, for months, falls away. Without talking, we take off our clothes and he is inside me and I am close against him, trying to get closer, deeper. I will never lose this, never, he kisses me, my mouth brushes, kisses, touches his body. We hold each other tightly and cry into the evening.

I am not dead.

I rest my head on Emil's chest and listen to him breathe.

"They told me you remember nothing?" Emil says. It is a question.

"Nothing? No. I remember a great deal. I didn't remember you died."

I must be insane then.

"You don't remember that we planned my disappearance?"

"What do you mean?"

"We heard they were going to arrest me," Emil says. "We knew they'd be watching us. Waiting for us to escape together. So we planned my death. You were supposed to meet me in the mountains after a couple of months. You never came."

I raise myself onto my elbow.

"Why didn't someone let me know you were still alive?"

Emil's hand brushes my cheek. "When I found out about your accident, I was in the mountains and couldn't come down. Of course, I wanted someone to tell you, but the others thought it better if you didn't know. That way the government would be certain I was dead. Mrs. Harris is a spy, you know, and seeing your grief each day would convince her I was dead."

I shiver. Is this my husband talking? The man who had been a boy of fifteen, chasing me through the forest until we tumbled to the ground, the pine needles our bed when we made

YOU REMEMBER THE PAST. YOU WILL FOREVER REMEMBER LOTTIE'S MURDER.

love for the first time. The boy who promised never to hurt me? Never to let harm come to me or our daughter.

This was the wrong world for such promises.

"You let me believe you were dead."

"I couldn't come myself," he said. "What if they'd caught me? You would have gone through all that agony and I'd really be dead."

Who were these people who would let me suffer so?

"They need me," Emil says. "I am important to the cause. We must give the country back to the people."

"Which people?" I ask. "Those who would let a woman believe her husband is dead when he isn't, only to further their cause?"

I feel anger. I want to strike my husband. No. I want to hurt the people who have made him like this. Into a killer. I sigh. No. I just want to close my eyes and sleep, wake up in another place, with my child beside me as we rest in Emil's arms.

"It is the fault of the government," Emil says, pulling me down next to him. "We have become animals to fight them."

Emil has killed so many. Including the boy Emil I fell in love with so many years ago?

"So your friends thought my accident was a good thing?"

"They said it was better for you too. You wouldn't have to pretend grief."

"Ah, yes. It was certainly better for me to really feel the grief! To believe you were dead! Why are you here now?"

He is silent. And then he says, "I kept dreaming of you. Hearing your cries. I could not stand it. I had to come."

Finally. This is my husband.

"We will have to leave," Emil said.

"Tonight?" Please tonight so that I don't have to wake up one more morning and learn again that he is dead.

Emil sits up. We face one another.

"No. One more day. I have some things to do tonight."

Raids, no doubt. Killing.

"I'll meet you tomorrow at the airport."

"Meet you? Can't you come get me? I have this memory problem, remember? I won't remember where to go."

"It's too risky for me to come back here," he says. None of this makes sense to me. "I'll leave you directions and rendezvous time. Don't worry." He kisses my forehead. "Trust me. It'll be all right."

We make love again, and I think of the despair I had felt earlier, upon learning of Emil's "death." I would go through it one more time. Could I do it? One more time. I remember looking at the bottle of pills. Perhaps tomorrow would be the day I could no longer stand it, and I would take the pills.

Emil leaves our bed, disappearing into the darkness momentarily. My heart races. Will he return? Or was he just an apparition?

"Emil?" I whisper.

"I'm right here," he says. He comes into the room and puts on his clothes. He is a shadow putting on shadow clothes.

"I left a note on the counter, where you'll see it first thing in the morning. It has directions to the airport in case you've forgotten how to get there and the time we'll meet. You must be there on time, my love. They will make me leave whether you're there or not. They are quite angry with me. Saying no man or woman is more important than the cause and I am too valuable to lose to stupidity."

"Is that what they call love? Stupidity?"

"Many of them have been through so much," he says. "They have forgotten about love."

"And we have been through so little?"

I feel him wince. I know he carries the death of our daughter with him. Her death. And all the others he killed to avenge her death. To assuage the grief. I wonder. Does he feel better because of their deaths? No. Not the boy I loved on the forest floor.

We embrace. I do not want to let him go. I cry.

"Please don't go," I whisper.

"I will be back," he says. "I promise."

He pulls away from me, kisses me on the lips, and then is gone.

I try to stay awake. If I stay awake, I won't forget that Emil is alive. I say it to myself, again and again. A chant. "Emil is alive. Emil is alive."

I sleep.

THE FOG ROLLS OVER ME, MEOWS, AND LICKS ME GOOD-BYE FOREVER.

I AWAKEN WITH A HEADACHE THAT FEELS centuries old. I close my eyes and will it away. Emil. He can make it go away. Massage it away. Make love to it.

I smile. "Emil," I call. He does not answer.

Perhaps he has gone out to get breakfast. Surprise me. The house is so quiet.

"Emil!" I call again.

I get up and go into the kitchen.

Something is wrong. Something is wrong. My heart races. I feel as I felt when Lottie died. Knowing. Knowing.

"Emil!" I am angry. He should not have left without telling me. He knows how I worry.

A book sits on the counter. I have not seen it before. I go to it and open it.

It is a journal of some kind. My handwriting. I frown. I don't remember.

"July 6. Do you remember yet? Has it been long enough? Has it sunk in?"

Has what sunk in?

I flip the page.

"You need it to sink in so that you do not go through this every morning.

"Emil is dead."

The room spins. What?

I turn the page. His obituary.

I scream. I throw up all over myself. What is this? What is this? Wake me up from this nightmare. Wake me up. It's not real. Not real.

"Emil!" I scream. Over and over.

Please somebody help me. Wake me up.

A hand touches my shoulder. I whirl around. A man in black. I do not recognize him. I move away.

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Sanchez," he says. "I didn't mean to frighten you. I heard you screaming."

I back away. Emil is dead. Emil is dead.

"I'm from the police."

Someone complained about my screaming?

"We just wanted to check on you," he says. "See how you're doing?"

Have they come to arrest me? Emil is dead. Emil is dead.

"Are you all right?"

I stutter, "My husband is dead."

"Yes, I know. I'm sorry." He looks genuinely concerned. I do not believe it. They are all animals. No. An insult to animals.

"How is your memory?"

"My memory? I don't know. I can't remember." I laugh. Hysterical. He better not touch me. Slap me. Help me. Emil is dead.

"I have visited you before," he says. "You don't need to fear me. We are just concerned about you. Living alone. Are you getting enough to eat?"

He is looking around the room. His gaze momentarily rests on the book and then he looks away from it. He has seen it before.

Read it before. He sits on one of the stools, his arm brushes the countertop, and a piece of yellow paper flutters to the floor. He reaches for it.

My stomach twists. Something about that yellow paper. Something I should know.

He stares at it and then folds it up and puts it in his pocket.

"What is it?" I ask. It is mine. Give it back. Give it back!

He smiles. "Nothing. It fell out of my pocket. A grocery list. I must be going now." He stands. "Please let us know if you need anything. If you can remember that. Good day."

He smiles and nods. Like a cat who has swallowed a canary.

A vulture.

He is gone, and I am alone. I almost want him to come back, so I can think about something else. Emil is dead. Emil is dead.

I clean up the vomit and make myself eat. I am exhausted. I have no strength.

My body tells me I go through this every morning. Some evil torture designed by the fates. I cannot go on. I cannot. My daughter killed by the government. My husband dead trying to kill as many of the government soldiers as possible. Building a bomb? He had once been such a gentle boy. Dreaming of going to the city. Dreaming of a country without war. We had many dreams. Some land. A house. Children. A fairy tale of a fairy land. Now the dreams are all gone. I am a childless widow.

Something about that yellow paper. I close my eyes and try to remember.

The sun turns. I cry until I can't. Then I sit. Wondering.

Mrs. Harris brings me groceries.

"I heard the police have surrounded the airport," she says, watching me as she puts away the food. "They are going to arrest many of the guerrillas. This is what I hear."

"What do I care? My husband is dead."

I want her to leave. She is gone. I can hardly remember her being there. Or the police. Is it all fading away? Will I go through this every day for an eternity? What kind of punishment is this? What have I done? Given birth to a child and loved a man? What have I done?

I cannot do this.

I go into the bathroom and open the medicine cabinet. I take out the sleeping pills.

It is over.

Dusk is covering the city again. Another day. Soon I will sleep and forget it all. Only this time, I will not wake up. At least not in this world. I will find another country. I fill a glass with water and then go into the bedroom. I sit on the bed.

Lottie is dead. Emil is dead. Now me. It is my turn. They have killed us all. Hope is dead. Why were we given hope? It causes so much grief. The hope that the world will get better. The hope that we can change things. The hope that this reality isn't the only one; Lottie is alive and well, unbattered, unbloodied, someplace else. The hope that Emil is alive in some other place, alive as he was. A boy full of life, the boy who was gentle and loved his wife and child. The boy who did not kill. Would not kill. Would not manipulate.

The yellow paper. Something about the paper.

Who would not manipulate. Would not let his wife live in agony for a cause.

"Emil is dead. Emil is dead."

A piece of memory pops into my brain for an instant like a flashbulb going off.

No. Emil is alive. Emil is alive. And he let me believe day after day that he was dead. Because he is one of them. One of the chosen many, lost in their blood feast. Ripping out their own livers, day after day.

I stand.

The yellow paper. The rendezvous information. Time. Place. The police have him. Now. He is dead now. I stare at the pills. He was alive. He was alive.

Now. He. Is. Dead.

I swallow the pills. And wait. For the fog to come in on little cat feet. Everything is cottony.

I hear voices from faraway, but I cannot move.

"My God." Emil's voice. "She's taken the whole bottle. How could I have let you talk me into doing this to her!"

"It was a good diversion." I do not know this voice. "They found the note; now they're all at the airport, thinking they've trapped us and instead, they're being blown apart."

The fog is thicker. I will leave this place.

"I promised you I would come back," Emil says to me. "Don't leave me! What are you saying? Where are you going?"

"To a place where there is no killing," I say.

Is he laughing? "There is no such place."

I touch my chest. "There is. Here."

"Don't go!" Is he screaming?

"She's out of it." The other voice. "Dead or crazy, she's useless to us now."

"I will not leave her!" Emil cries. "She's coming with us."

The fog rolls over me, meows, and licks me good-bye forever.

I AWAKE WITH A HEADACHE. MY HEAD POUNDING OUT A MESSAGE I cannot comprehend, as if someone is tugging on my sleeve, trying to tell me something. I lie still, waiting. For sounds of Emil. I smile, and the headache fades.

"Emil," I whisper.

Where is he? The house is so quiet. My head throbs again. I push myself up.

"Emil!" I cry. What is this panic that is rising in me? "Emil!" It is almost a scream.

"What?" Emil stands in the doorway. "What's wrong?"

I smile. He is so beautiful. The boy I fell in love with. "Nothing. I'm sorry. It was so quiet. I have this stupid headache."

He comes and sits next to me and rubs my temples. "Again? You have it every morning. We're going to have to figure out what's going on."

"Everything is fine as long as you're here," I say leaning against him.

"We were quiet on purpose," he says. "We have a surprise for you."

I sit up. "Oh?"

Suddenly, my daughter is coming through the doorway, carrying a breakfast tray that is way too big for her. She frowns with great concentration, trying to keep the orange juice from spilling. Her father finally takes the tray from her and puts it on my lap. Lottie scrambles up next to me, spilling the juice as she leans over and places a wet kiss on my cheek.

"Sorry, Mom," she says, noticing the spilled orange juice.

I kiss her back. "No, thank you for this wonderful breakfast. What's the occasion?"

"Nothing special except that we're here together," Emil says.

"We're going to have a picnic down by the river later on," Lottie says, bouncing on the bed.

"Just like yesterday?" I ask.

"And like all the days before," Emil says. "And all the days to come."

I embrace them both. I have never been so happy. My head throbs momentarily. I think I hear someone calling my name. Someone touching me. Someone weeping.

"What's wrong, sweetheart?" Emil asks. "Are you remembering something?"

I shake my head. "It's nothing. Just something from another country, another place. I'll forget it in a moment." □

PRINCESS

Continued from page 33

was the source of the glow, and leading down into the well was a staircase, its cut stones alone firm and substantial in her sight. This, this was her way!

Holding her cloak tight to her body, she began to climb down into the well, following the source of the light. Soon she would see her Prince, soon she would be in his arms once again, and be whole.

As she descended, the gray mists became firm, the world regained its color and substance. The glow she had followed now was revealed as the light of a thousand diamond stars. Ahead of her was the well-remembered avenue of silver trees. She spun around in delight and brushed their leaves with her fingers, making them chime as if in a light breeze. Next she came to the trees of gold, and again she touched the leaves to hear their softer ring. From the ground at her feet, she picked up a jeweled flower and fastened it in her hair.

Then she came to the diamond sands of the lakeshore. Reflected on the clear crystal surface of the water were the tall white spires of her Prince's Underworld palace, and she could hear the strains of music floating across the lake. But there was no Prince come to meet her and row her across.

For a moment, the Princess felt a bitter pang of disappointment. But of course, he couldn't know that she had finally found her way back!

She lifted her skirts and stepped into one of the small boats tethered by the shore, taking the oars into her own soft hands. It was more difficult to row than she had imagined, but she persevered, for every stroke was taking her nearer and nearer to her Prince. Already the sound of the music was making her head reel. Even in the boat, the urge to dance was almost overwhelming.

At last she came to the opposite shore. Jumping from the boat, she ran up the path of crushed pearls, toward the palace, toward the music, toward her Prince, her soul. And there was the well-remembered ballroom, the light of the diamonds overhead, the pearl floor gleaming, the couples whirling and laughing as they danced.

And there, there was her Prince! She ran toward him, crying out aloud, but no one saw her, no one heard her voice.

Only the Prince's partner paused to turn her head. "I thought I heard someone calling out your name."

But the Prince danced on without stopping. "It is nothing, only the wind. Do not listen."

The Princess paused in shock. What was wrong? Why could he not see her? Then she realized that she still wore the cloak of invisibility. With a cry of relief, she flung it off and ran out onto the ballroom floor to grasp at the sleeve of his gleaming white satin coat.

But the Prince shrugged off her hand and moved on in the unbroken pattern of the dance. Only his partner looked back. "I thought I felt something touch my arm."

The Prince held her hand more tightly as he led her in the dance. "It was nothing, only one of the other couples brushing past us. Pay no attention."

The Princess cried out in dismay. Why could he not see her? Why could he not hear her? She ran after him



again, pushing past the other dancers on the floor, but he turned with his partner, and at last the Princess could see the other woman's face clearly. It was her own. Her own face as she had seen it so many times in the mirror, but now with an unstained translucent purity—it was her soul.

I left it behind in the Underworld.

The Prince's partner frowned as the stricken Princess clutched at her in despair, pulling on her sleeve. "I thought for certain that I felt something touch me. Is someone calling my name?"

But the Prince bent down to touch her lips with his and gently silence her. "It is nothing, only the wind. Do not heed it. It is nothing. . . nothing."

As the Prince spoke, the Princess saw her own body begin to fade and grow indistinct. No matter how she cried and reached for the dancers passing by, no one saw her, no one heard her, no one felt her touch. After a while, she had no more substance than a wisp of mist floating in the ballroom.

And all that while, the bright diamond lights glittered, the music played, and the couples on the floor danced on and on and on. For there is no sun in the Underworld, and daybreak will never come. □

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GAMES

By John Gregory Betancourt

Shadowrun's second edition cyberfantasy is bigger and better than ever.



In the year 2053, the streets of Seattle have been transformed into a mixture of magic and machines in the latest Shadowrun from FASA. Cover art by Larry Elmore.

SHADOWRUN (FASA CORPORATION, \$30.00) IS, essentially, yet another fantasy role-playing game. In a field full of *Dungeons & Dragons* and *D&D* clones, the first question when looking at a game must always be: Do we *really* need another one? For *Shadowrun*, gamers have answered with a resounding, "Yes!"

Since its original release three years ago, more than a hundred thousand enthusiasts have bought into the game, and the *Shadowrun* universe has expanded to include a popular series of paperback adventure novels from Roc Books.

Now FASA has released a second edition of the player's manual along with the usual assortment of add-on aids, including a GAME MASTER (GM) reference screen, a booklet of non-player characters which GMs can introduce into games, and more.

The *Shadowrun* universe is a blend of watered-down William Gibson-type cyberpunk (cyber implants, monomolecular whips, the sprawl) and derivative high fantasy à la David Eddings and Dennis McKiernan (elves, orcs, trolls, etc.).

It's the year 2053, and the streets of Seattle have been transformed into an odd mixture of arcane magic and cybernetic machines. The megacorporations have

long since taken over the world, but the streets still belong to you and your character. Whether you choose to play a street samurai, with the combat skills that make you an urban enforcer, or a decker, who steps inside the hidden databases that wield the world's true power, it's you the megacorps come to when the dirty work needs to be done in this strange world of elves, orcs, and cyberpunks. As one might expect, it creates a melange that's not quite like anything else on the market today.

This second edition expands, clarifies, and in some spots replaces, rules and information from the original release. The main changes are designed to provide novice players with more and clearer examples, to speed up the learning-to-play process so you can get on with the game. The combat system has also been redesigned to run more quickly and to make gun combat deadly (as it should be).

In the introduction not only do you find out how the world of *Shadowrun* came to be, you get a feel for how different it is from our Earth. Early in the next century, after many wars, magic returned. Trolls, orcs, and elves threw off their human guises and reverted to their true nature. Mages appeared, able to wield spells and magic. But the old world remained, too, and a balance of science and sorcery was achieved.

One particularly noteworthy part in the introductory material is a short story ("Plus Ça Change," by Paul Hume) which is designed to give new players an idea of how people talk and act in this new world, and what the world itself is like—basically, this future evoked in the detail only fiction can provide.

Probably the area most in need of streamlining is the process of creating a character, which (as in many other role-playing games) is complicated, cumbersome, and involves using information from pages that are widely separated in the manual. New players must leaf back and forth to find each section as needed.

Still, for those who persevere, the information is all there in the manual. It can be assembled and understood with patience and a little time and rereading as necessary.

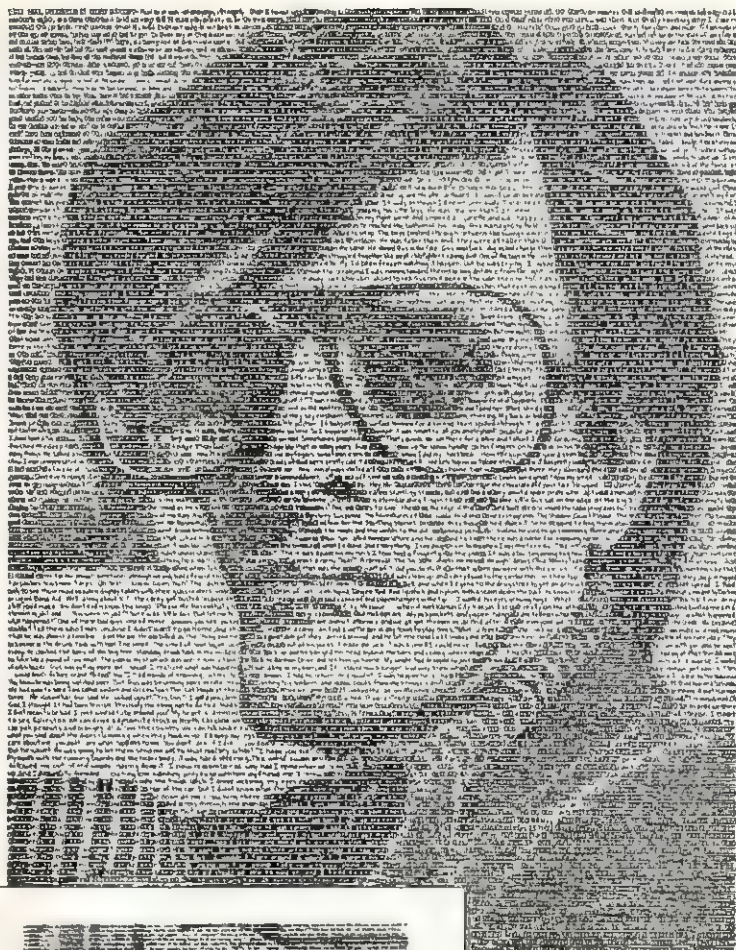
A "Behind the Scenes" section tells you what to do once you've created your character. Here you will find information on *Shadowrun's* many no-longer-mythical creatures, places you can go, etc. The information is at times very dense and should provide sufficient detail for many adventures. Particular homage is paid to William Gibson's work, with the Matrix, a global information net you can jack into with direct cerebral implants. "Behind the Scenes" even describes combat within the Matrix. For those who've successfully had an adventure, the notes on finding and using fences to dispose of stolen property are a must-read.

Continued on page 71

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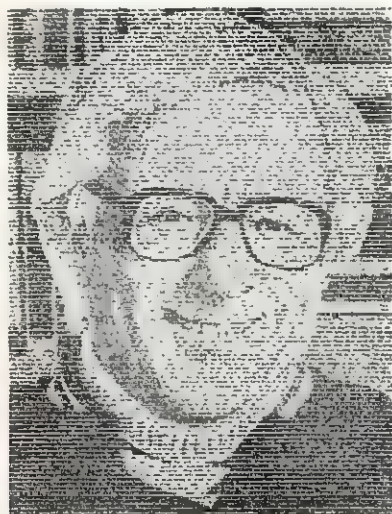
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COMICS

By Damian Kilby

With science fictional abilities, the alien Icon seeks to bring racial harmony to Earth.

With powers far beyond those of mortal men, Icon, helped by his sidekick Rocket, takes a stand against racism. Art by M.D. Bright.



THE ORIGIN OF BRAND NEW COMIC BOOK superhero Icon opens with a familiar sequence in the modern mythology of superheroes:

An alien space capsule crash-lands down to planet Earth in an isolated section of rural America. A young woman, sole witness to the crash, finds a baby within, for all appearances a male, human child. She takes this child home to raise as her own, never telling anyone of his true origins, raising him with a strong sense of right and wrong. Of course, as the child grows into manhood, his great powers manifest themselves and he chooses to use them to uphold justice and help humankind. To this end he adopts an alter-ego and dons a garish, skin-tight costume in which he will battle the forces of injustice. . . .

Sound familiar? Originally, the alien child was from the planet Krypton and it was Ma and Pa Kent who raised him up to become the Man of Steel.

But in the case of Icon, there are some striking differences. The woman who adopts him is a plantation slave in the pre-Civil War American South. And the alien in the space capsule was a decidedly inhuman looking adult before the super science of its life pod reconfigured its genetic structure to that of a baby human. One hundred and fifty years pass before the alien decides to take up the mantle of a superhero—

during the course of all those years the alien, known as Augustus, has been living through all the major events of African American experience.

In essence, Icon is a *black* version of Superman.

With the *Icon* magazine, writer Dwayne McDuffie has purposefully set out to focus on issues of race and social responsibility, while at the same time remaining true to all the standard formulas of the colorful, action-packed superhero genre. Yet, in reworking the familiar tropes of Superman's origin, McDuffie has managed to put a more sophisticated spin on the science fictional elements at the base of the superhero mythos. The emergence of this ambitious new comic book serves up plenty of food for thought on the mix of comics, race and science fiction.

African Americans have, historically, been given short shrift in comic books, when they appear at all. Most black faces show up in supporting roles, such as Robbie Robertson, a newspaper editor in *Spiderman*, or the *alternate* Green Lantern—a black man who occasionally fills in for the regular, white hero.

In the '70s a number of African American heroes showed up in starring roles: Luke Cage—Hero for Hire, Black Goliath, The Black Panther, Black Lightning, The Falcon. Many of the characters from this era seemed to be derived from the black exploitation films of the day—street-tough, jive-talking clichés already made familiar by Hollywood.

None of these heroes lasted long in their own comic books, either because of reader prejudice or because they were mediocre magazines in an overcrowded field. Though the writers and editors no doubt had good intentions, this batch of superheroes came off as second-stringers made up of left-over ideas after all the real energy had been expended on the vast array of white super men.

But *Icon* is avoiding this last problem because it is getting a fresh start; it's the first in a whole new line of comics being published by DC under the "Milestone" imprint. This is the beginning of a new comic book universe (i.e. it will be unconnected to any previous comic books), centered around the fictional City of Dakota. The entire project seems to have been designed to highlight minority characters and some of the realities of their world. Icon, and the others to follow (which will include *Static*, *Blood Syndicate* and *Hardware*) won't have the handicap of being second-banana after-thoughts overshadowed by firmly established white heroes. Looking at all the background material for *Icon*, it is clear that a great deal of imaginative energy and careful thought has gone into the creation of a hero and cast of supporting characters, and all of their relationships to the world around them.

The premiere issue of *Icon* shows signs of a greater insight and sensitivity in its approach to its characters, compared to many other comics. The story's nar-

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native has skipped ahead 150 years to the 1990's where we meet the character Raquel, a fifteen year old black girl living in a housing project. She wants to be a writer like Toni Morrison, but feels she doesn't have anything interesting in her life to write about, and besides, she can't afford a typewriter. Later, she tags along with a group of kids who are burglarizing a mansion in an exclusive suburb. (Raquel is tempted by the idea that she might find a typewriter.) As they're dragging out a large screen TV they are confronted by a black man whom they assume is the butler. He is, in fact, the owner of the mansion, lawyer Augustus Freeman, turning the tables on the assumptions made by these black kids.

The story centers around Augustus and Raquel. She pushes the idea that he become Icon, to serve as a role model for the less fortunate. She assigns herself the role of his sidekick, The Rocket, protected by one of his alien gadgets. They work together but they stand on opposite sides of the political fence.

He's the staunch Republican, believing in by-your-own-boots individual responsibility. Raquel stands up for ideas of greater social responsibility and quotes from W.E.B. DuBois. Augustus prefers Booker T. Washington. He doesn't believe race is the real issue, while she stands ready to point out instances where the color of a person's skin does make a difference. This dialogue gets a workout in ongoing, entertaining banter between the two of them; it's a simple but effective gimmick that keeps a spotlight on the social issues and puts some of the slam-bam action into a context.

When the two of them are surrounded by a hostile police squad, Raquel scores a point for her side of the argument about racism by quipping, "I bet this never happens to Superman." This point also makes explicit the fact that Superman is the original model against which Icon must stand.

Superman was the first superhero and he is still the ultimate standard bearer in the genre. He can easily be seen as the clean-cut representative of a middle America that doesn't question the status quo. It makes sense to return to the original if you want to remake the genre with a new sensibility.

Each of the ways that Icon's origin diverges from the Superman template seem to be carefully placed amendments which both make the science fiction gimmickry more substantial and satisfying, and help link Icon historically to the African American experience.

Icon is originally an *alien* looking alien. It is the advanced science of his life pod which re-shapes him into human form for survival and camouflage purposes. This ties neatly together with an explanation of his superpowers. These powers are a by-product of the fact that the life pod

optimized the human genetic pattern, making Icon the fulfillment of all human biological potential. Here is a much more compelling mesh of ideas in the creation of super powers than sighting the effects of a yellow sun or a bite from a radioactive spider.

One of the results of Icon's genetic perfection is that he's virtually immortal. This is handy since he's waiting for Earth technology to advance far enough to be of use in repairing his space capsule. But a side effect of this is that he lives through the entire history of black experience in the USA. He fights his way through five different wars, rising from the plantation, through emancipation, the Jim Crow era and on through the era of civil rights victories in the '60s. The broad scope and the alien vantage point are the sort of things science fiction does so well and serves as an example of a way to apply SF to issues of race in America.

The science fiction remains secondary. It's still primarily a means to the end of creating a superman. Thus the comic book will not focus on the alien's 150 years of living through American history. And, disappointingly, the hero's genetic perfection yields only physical powers such as strength, invulnerability and the power of flight with no increased brain power, nor special mental abilities. Another major element yet to be seriously explored is the fact that at his core this hero is totally inhuman. There seem to be no details available on his alien nature. We don't even learn his original name, as if he really only began to exist when he reached Earth. To explore the truly alien too closely would drain away the vicarious thrill of projecting the reader into the role of hero.

The real lifeblood of the series is the lives and concerns of the minority characters, and this appears to be well thought out and ambitious in intent as the story begins to unfold. But there are built-in limitations in tackling social issues in the simplified world of superheroes. The two lead characters, Augustus and Raquel, appear to be setting forth on an adventure of discovery and political education, yet by the very nature of an ongoing open-ended series, the heroes can never be allowed to change too much. Over time, how much will Augustus and Raquel be allowed to learn from their experiences? Will they be caught in a static illusion of growth, forever asking the same questions, endlessly standing in for the two sides of the great political debate? Setting fantasy characters to fighting a real world problem such as racism can be a no win situation after a point: who wants to read forever about a hero unable to bring about a resolution?

It is too early to tell, but let us hope that the creators of *Icon* have both the ambition and the wisdom to do better than that. The world could use a little sanity. □

GAMES

Continued from page 66

"Critters/Gear" reference material, with appropriate tables, is assembled at the back of the book, where it can be found quickly. The alphabetical listings are informative, with many pictures, and offer more material than anyone will need for successful play.

To get new players off to a quick start, the "sample game" section provides enough background on future Seattle to get any group of players moving. Notes on Seattle's population (63 percent human), underground criminal organizations (dominated by the Japanese yakuza), and criminal meeting places such as the Barrens (where there is "a marketplace to buy and sell humanity"), pretty much set the stage for in-the-shadows-of-the-law adventuring.

It should be noted, however, that this is merely a scenario: there are no set tasks to be accomplished, no precious gems that must be found before the universe collapses, no virgins (male or female) to be saved from ravening dragons. As in many role-playing games, the GM must come up with his own motivation for the characters. *Shadowrun* is an open-ended gaming system, which means the world and its creations are largely theirs; what happens to characters is up to the GM and the players.

Maps of the Pacific Northwest (centering on Seattle, of course) and the bulk of North America (now broken up into various smaller governments, some ruled by tribes of native Americans) provide more detailed reference material for games with a cross-continent range.

Despite the new "ease of use" instructions included in the revision, *Shadowrun* is still not ideally suited for the novice player. Any group that's never played a role-playing game before will be hard pressed to make sense out of the manual, and impatience will probably drive them back to Monopoly or Risk.

Once understood, the combat and negotiating system (based on dice-rolling, with the highest number of "hits" or suitably high numbers generated in a given roll determining the degree of success—or failure) is interesting and works. Once that system is firmly grasped, much of *Shadowrun*'s gaming system falls neatly into place. The mixed-success/partial failure is a good idea, since most role-playing games are painted in black and white: you either succeed or fail, unless your GM is up to playing out all the nuances of the game. Here, you can have a little bit of both, much like in real life.

Once the characters are created and the gaming system is firmly grasped, the fun

really starts. The richness of *Shadowrun*'s background world allows side trips and indulgences for players interested in either the cyberpunk or fantasy elements. Based on the interests of the players, games can easily focus on either fantasy or science fiction, or blend them in interesting ways.

Our test-players' single biggest criticism lay with some of the little stupidities that have crept into the player's manual. Phrases like "negro elves" will doubtlessly set some people's teeth on edge. In our increasingly politically-correct age, that's certainly a major oversight. Other things that ring oddly to the ears: "team karma," "thermographic vision," and the concept of buying (as in paying cash for) NPC (non-player-character) "buddies."

Our test-players' greatest praise was for the magic system (which runs much like *Shadowrun*'s weapon combat) and the detail contained in the manual. Not only does the manual include long descriptions of "Critters" and "Gear," but it also summarizes that information in a couple of pages at the end of each section, for quick reference.

For the experienced gamer, *Shadowrun* is a good investment. Our test-players decided they didn't like the combat or magic systems well enough to switch over to them (they prefer ones they've written themselves), but they intend to use the manual as a reference tool in the future. It contains a plethora of information which can be adapted for use in other role-playing systems, whether store-bought or custom made. We expect to be looking through the *Shadowrun* manual for years to come because it is that useful: for the serious gamer with long-term expectations, it could become a core reference tool. For those who already play and enjoy *Shadowrun*, it is a must-have addition to the game. □

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TELEVISION

Continued from page 21

a 12-part miniseries since it's very large and involved with a massive cast of characters set in a high fantasy setting. But nobody would buy it and nobody would produce it, so it would sort of be a waste of my time to write it that way. But writing it as a novel, there's a market for that.

"But on the other hand, I get ideas that are obviously television or film ideas. Bigger ideas, I think, have to be novels because the novel or the series of novels gives you room for a lot of characters and a very complex plot. Even a feature film has so many fewer words than an average length novel that you're really compelled to tell a relatively simple and straightforward story. But there are ideas I get and characters and situations that could be either, and in some cases, I develop those as either or as both and basically see what happens."

Following lunch, we took another van ride to a different location further up the road. A shallow river, maybe 20-30 feet wide, was crossed by a dangerously deteriorating stone-arch bridge. Being notoriously clumsy and afraid of heights, I refused to go across the bridge for any shooting to be done from that point of view.

The stunt doubles got a workout at this location, because Tom and Cat fall the 15 or so feet from the top of the bridge into the water. The crew had to pour water into the stream to raise the water level so the stunt doubles would not get hurt when they fell in.

George's co-executive producer James Crocker joined us for a few hours at this location. They had worked together on the mid-'80s network version of *The Twilight Zone*, where George had gotten his start in television.

"Our main constraint is budgetary," said Martin, as we talked about the future of the show. "Obviously if I was doing a series of science fiction novels you have the freedom to get a lot more wild in there, because you can describe anything you want in a novel. We're going to have substantial budget if we go to series, but it is nonetheless a *television* budget, and that puts certain limits on you. You can't build million dollar sets every week and so forth. So essentially what we want to do is have a mix of different worlds.

"Occasionally we will go to a world that is very different, that is very far out, where the architecture and maybe even the people are quite different. We might even go to a world where it hasn't been humans that have evolved, and it has been some other sentient race. Lots of stuff like that is pos-

sible, but it can't be the mainstay of the series. The mainstay of the series in order to make this producible has to be alternate history, stories where the world at least bears a certain superficial resemblance to the world that we live in, and more importantly, to the world that we *film* in, because we have to work with the sets and backlots and so forth that we have."

We spent what seemed like hours waiting for the light-level to drop for a night shot with the menacing manhounds who pursue Cat. There are three manhounds, two male and one female. Thane, portrayed by Robert Knepper, has his personal reason for chasing Cat, whom he calls "Little Animal." Signy Coleman, who plays the female called Dyana, was a regular on the summer series *The Human Target*. The manhounds dress in jackets, pants and boots reminiscent of *Dune's* "still-suits," and the actors were sweating profusely.

Filming resumed Wednesday morning at a different location. I knew I had reached the location in Canyon Country when I saw a gas station sign posted with the price of hay, oats and carrots, and an airstream trailer harnessed for horses. Since the pilot episode of *Doorways* takes place in a world where all petro-chemical products have been destroyed by a bio-engineering experiment gone haywire, alternative methods of transportation are in order.

On this day, I met the two best-known members of the pilot cast: Kurtwood Smith and Hoyt Axton.

Kurtwood Smith should be familiar to most SF film fans. He played the evil Clarence Bodicker in the first *Robocop* film and also appeared as the benevolent, blue-eyed, white-haired president of the Federation in *Star Trek VI*. Kurtwood plays Trager, the character who gives Martin the opportunity to develop one of the interesting concepts of parallel world—that some worlds have parallel characters.

Hoyt Axton, a huge well-known character actor and legendary country western singer, plays Cissy's grandfather and guardian Jake. Hoyt was born to live in this world; in real life he doesn't fly and had to drive from Montana to play the part.

Most of the afternoon was spent filming one long scene which takes place inside the bar. Cissy and Jake had picked up Tom and Cat along the road and brought them along to the bar. There they meet Mike and his mother (played by Jennifer Rhodes), a woman concerned about traveling unprotected along the highways. The bar is a western honky-tonk, and the fashion is post-Holocaust by way of Haight-Ashbury.

George left early and we made plans for me to do another day of shooting the fol-

*We're going
to have a
substantial
budget if
we go to
series....*

lowing week, when they would be filming on the Warner Brothers Studio backlot.

That next week I was able to spot the locations as they are used in other films. With minor window dressing or changes to customize the look, this location has been seen as Gotham City in *Batman Returns*, Paris and Boston in *The Human Target*, and Central City in *The Flash*. In *Doorways* the street was downtown Denver in the petroleum-challenged world. The pavement was strewn with hay, and there was a hot-air balloon landing spot in front of the post-office. There was a barricaded entrance to an unfinished subway system, and the manhounds made another appearance, still pursuing Cat.

About another week of shooting followed my last day on the set, and then George spent most of the summer supervising the post-production work and starting work on the six scripts for the series, which the network had ordered. In his position of executive producer, George could not write more than the pilot script and the Texas episode, but he has gathered himself a magnificent creative team.

"I've got five other scripts that have been hired out," he said. "James Crocker has done a script. Jim was the other executive producer on the pilot. Jim worked with me on *Twilight Zone*. He's also written for *Max Headroom* and for *Beauty and the Beast* and a number of other things. He served on *Simon and Simon* for many years. Michael Cassutt did a script for me. Michael, of course, is a prose SF novelist and short story writer, as well as being an experienced television writer.

"I think humor is an important part of television drama in particular," said Martin. If you look at some of the science fiction shows that have been done, *Star Trek* in its last two incarnations in particular, they seem to be shows that are almost humorless and take themselves so very seriously.

No airdate has been set for the pilot (which will be used to kick off the series if the network decides to go ahead), but work is proceeding on the six scripts.

When we last spoke, Martin summed up what made this experience different from the others he has had. "I've had good experiences on television," he explained. "I've worked on some classy shows like the second *Twilight Zone* and *Beauty and the Beast*.

"I think what makes this one very special to me is the fact that this one is really my baby. Those other shows were shows created by other people that I was hired to work on. While I brought a lot of myself to them, nonetheless they were not my own children, so to speak, and this one is."

Come the fall season, I have a feeling that *Doorways* will have a chance to become near and dear to science fiction fans everywhere. □

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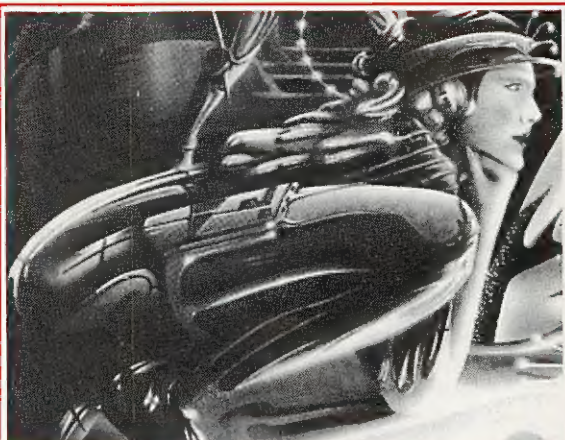


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CONTRIBUTORS

HAVING MADE HIS FIRST SALE IN 1953 with "Gorgon Planet," **Robert Silverberg** is currently celebrating his fortieth year as a professional writer. He won the 1956 Hugo Award for being the most promising new author. Since then he has written millions of words, including such important (and diverse) novels as *Dying Inside* and *Lord Valentine's Castle*. His numerous non-fiction works include *Mound Builders of Ancient America* and *Scientists and Scoundrels: A Book of Scientific Hoaxes*.

Frederik Pohl has been a member of science fiction fandom for as long as there has been SF. He was one of the founding members of the Futurians, a 1930s New York based fan club, along with Donald Wolheim, Isaac Asimov, and James Blish. Now, almost half a century later, Pohl has become one of the Grandmasters of SF himself. His recent novellas, *Mining the Oort* and *Outnumbering the Dead*, are a worthy addition to his many decades of contributions to the field as writer, editor and agent.

Kim Antieau has recently completed a novel titled *Ruins*, a time travel story of a woman's search for her mother dealing with the Anasazi cliff dwellings that takes place both during the Civil War and modern times. Her story "Briar Rose" will be reprinted in *Year's Best Horror*.

In addition to being a prolific short story writer and anthologist, **John Betancourt** is also the publisher of Wildside Press, which consistently comes out with well-produced limited edition books.

Michael Bishop was the Guest of Honor at the most recent World Fantasy Convention, and will soon be a special guest at the International Conference for the Fantastic in the Arts. The movie of his forthcoming novel *Brittle Innings* is becoming a reality. Not only has the option been renewed, but Bishop has actually seen a script.

Ben Bova has won the Hugo Award six times in his 34 year career, including Best Editor in every year for which he was eligible. He has also served as the president of the Science Fiction Writers of America. His

most recent novel *Triumph*, is an alternate history work in which Winston Churchill had Stalin assassinated. Other Bova books include *Priviteers* and *Peacekeepers*.

Gregory Feeley's first novel, *The Oxygen Barons*, was a finalist for the Philip K. Dick award. He has recently completed his second novel, *Exit Without Saving*. His third novel, *Neptune's Beach*, will appear from Tor Books next year. He reviews books regularly for both *The Washington Post* and *New York Newsday*, among others.

Damian Kilby has recently moved to Oregon, and is still wondering what the ultimate effect of the East Coast to West Coast migration will be on his writing. After stories in many of the field's top magazines, Kilby is currently at work on his first novel.



Allen Steele



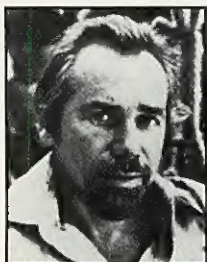
M.C. Valada

THE FASCINATION **BARRYN. MALZBERG** feels for the world of music is self-evident from this issue's story, but what is little known is that he is an avid violinist. He won the first John W. Campbell Jr. Memorial Award for his controversial novel *Beyond Apollo*, and is the author of over 75 novels and collections. His writing has been praised by mainstream critics such as Joyce Carol Oates.

Allen Steele has had a successful start to his career as a novelist. His first book was voted Best First Novel in a 1990 *Locus* Readers Poll, while his second, *Clarke County, Space* was a finalist for the Philip K. Dick Award. His latest work, *Labyrinth of Night*, is just out from Tor Books.

Lois Tilton's latest novel is *Darkness on Ice*, a World War II thriller with vampires. Her dark fantasy has appeared in many of the field's top magazines. She is currently at work on a novel based on the new hit SF television series *Deep Space Nine*.

The photographic work of **M.C. Valada** can be seen at many science fiction conventions, where she is displaying her ongoing work-in-progress of the faces of SF. Her eventual goal is to have a portrait of every writer, editor, and artist for her traveling exhibit. She is married to comic book writer/editor Len Wein.

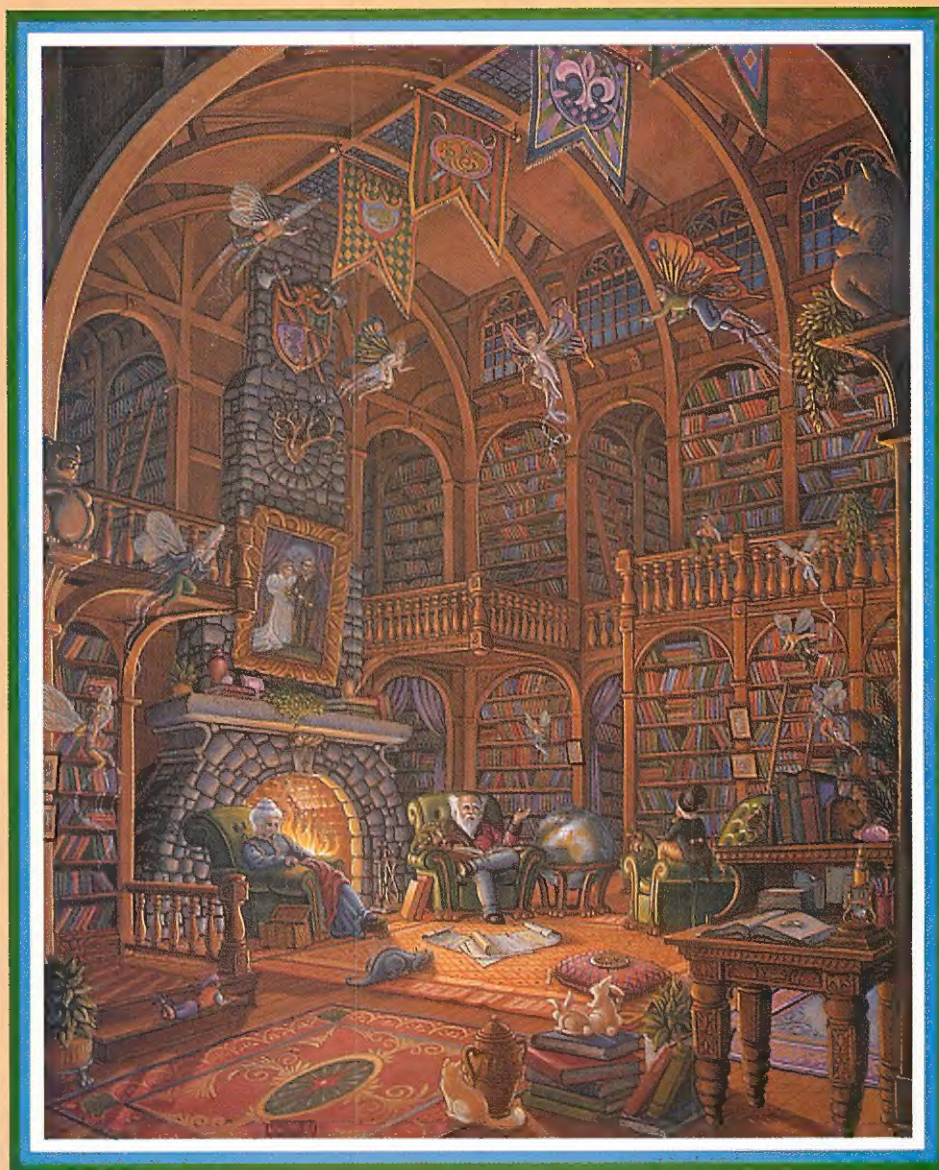


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Arthur C. Clarke, author of 2001: A Space Odyssey

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